

The cover
Australia's magazine of the performing arts December/January 1981 \$1.95

Theatre Australia

NIMROD'S 10th ANNIVERSARY

CELLULOID HEROES

A NEW DAVID WILLIAMSON PLAY

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herself

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Theatre Australia

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COVER POSTER BY MARTIN SHARP.



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by David Williamson

director John Bell, designer Larry Eastwood with, in alphabetical order



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Ramsey

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Smith

Barbara
Stephens

Peter
Summer

Honn
Seaps

Alan
Wilson

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the Shopfront Theatre

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director Neil Armfield,
designer Eamon D'Arcy with
David Atkins, Simon Burke,
Tony Sheldon, David Slingsby

3 The Three Sisters

by Anton Chekhov,
director Aubrey Mellor,
designer Kim Carpenter with
John Bell, Cathy Downes,
Michele Fawdon, Drew
Forsythe, Barry O'Hio

4 by David Hare,
director Neil Armfield

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JACKA PAGE Rev

COMMENT

HAIL NIMROD!

If there is any single reason for believing that Australians in the last 10 years really have found a national theatrical style, that this latest theatre renaissance really is going to last, that we really can have exciting, first-rate theatre here and that Sydney theatre really is more interesting than Melbourne theatre, then it is the extraordinary success of Nimrod Theatre.

Their achievements have been many, and are documented in this issue, celebrating their 10th anniversary. They have done more than any other company to encourage and produce Australian playwrights. They have found a vivid original Australian style for the classics. They have given actors and designers an influence more in keeping with their role in the product. They have created a theatre, as building, which is exciting merely to walk into. They have spread their influence, nationally and internationally, without ever losing sight of their specific local goals. They have continued to grow, defying Parkinson's laws, without becoming set, stultified, backward-looking, traditionalist or (not usually, as any critic bawling Abba all, and as John Bell rightly claims, they have continued to surprise their audiences — to lead theatrical taste without condescension. If you live in Sydney you go to Nimrod to be excited — not for medicinal culture.

Someone once said that at Nimrod you count on one show in three being really exciting or superbly good, the other two drabs. (a pretty good average — Kenneth Tynan on your head, son.) But you never know which one it is going to be, so you go to them all.

Not surprisingly all this has been accomplished with a small amount of critical hammering cynicism and plain bitchery. People have said that the audience is all friends, the management too commercial and entrepreneurial, the politics inebriable, stultified and unworld. They have complained about derivative productions of the classics, the Nimrod stable of actors, the

Sydney University theatrical mafia and the showy dominance of design (appropriate for 'Tinsel Town'). Radicals find Nimrod middle-class and elitist and conservatives find it infuriatingly radical. Playwrights complain of the condescension with which they are treated (at least until they are produced there), actors complain of the clique Jack Hibberd may lament that in Sydney it's hard to get into "a good fucking mouth" but Nimrod has at least generated a great deal of lively debate, and that is a sure sign that you are doing some good.

If now at 10 years Nimrod has a problem it is, as John Bell points out in this issue, that the programming has become all too predictable. People know what to expect and they decide accordingly whether or not to go. There are great theatres which rely on an identifiable house style and loyal audiences, but Nimrod always used to be more than that. It may be that as our theatre becomes richer and more diverse Nimrod will come to occupy a comfortable (and still, no doubt, valuable) niche of its own, but it is to be hoped that that time has not yet come. Their role is more to disturb others from their niches — perhaps not radically but effectively.

The most exciting prospect at the moment is that of yet another, a third new wave of 'Nimrod playwrights' like Sewell and Nowa, producing large canvases and showing that there are still huge areas theatrically unexplored, and whole new ways of processing information and ideas on our stages.

Ignoring for the time being the complaints, we thank Nimrod for what they have made of our theatre in the 70s and hope that they continue to surprise us in the 80s.



John McCallum

Theatre Australia

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Spring and Summer Titles

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Furtive Love

THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN

Dorothy Hewett

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Peter Kenna

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David Williamson

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I N F O

MICHAEL EDGLEY... Michael Edgley International together with a group of Australia's most prestigious companies has been awarded the management of the new 12,000 seat Sydney Entertainment Centre, the only FM Radio Station in Perth and the new 30 year lease of Luna Park in Sydney.

Michael Edgley, who has been overseas 50 times in the last 10 years, has just returned from a 10 week trip with the most exciting and spectacular bar of attractions and deals that he or any Australian showman has ever captured. Over the next three years Edgley will present throughout Australia an excess of 15 million dollars worth of spectacular entertainment.

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And early next year Edgley's first venture into film begins — it will be a major Australian feature film based on Rango Patterson's epic poem "The Man From Snowy River". It is said to be a film of action, adventure and world wide appeal.



Michael Edgley

THE NIMROD THEATRE... has organised a Women's Directors Workshop in an attempt to rectify the imbalance of women directors.

The workshop will be conducted by Ms Sue Todd, a leading British freelance director, whose latest production is her adaptation of Zoe Fairbanks' *Bewitched*.

Ms Sue Todd began her directing

career at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1968. From there, she was selected for the prestigious two year Trancin Directors Scheme and worked in major British repertory theatres. In the early 1970's, her work with Pam Gems on a series of productions at the now legendary Almost Free Theatre, was instrumental in starting the women's theatre movement. She then

spent four years at the Montross Regiment as a writer/director and co-wrote the highly successful play *Teen Dreams* with David Edgar.

The workshop is sponsored by the Premier of NSW through the Division of Cultural Activities and by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.



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Mary Gage at writing

THE KINGSFORD SMITH BACKGROUND STORY ...

Perth's National Theatre Company premiered Mary Gage's *The Seven Square of Dore* on 17th October 1980 (see TA's review in WA Review).

Mary Gage, the writer, is the National Theatre Company's writer-in-residence. Educated at Cambridge and trained in journalism by *The Times*, Mary has also written the plays *The New Life* and *Everyone's a General* which were performed in the Greenroom Theatre at the Playhouse in 1974 and 1976. *The New Life* was also performed in Sydney, published by Currency Press and is now on the New South Wales Leaving syllabus. Another of her plays about Charles Kingsford Smith, *The Price of Peace*, had first in Western Australia's 150th anniversary playwrighting competition in 1979.

Though the plot and dialogue of *The Seven Square of Dore* were scrupulously based on extensive research and it was said that the play opened up 'a convincing and satisfying



Mary Gage

understanding of the motives, strengths and weaknesses of the celebrated pilot of the Southern Cross', performances were terminated

WOMEN DIRECTORS, A LETTER TO THE EDITOR ...

Dear Sir,

Nimrod is to be applauded for its introduction of a 'Women Directors' Workshop (INFO TA Oct), but the impression that Nimrod is breaking new ground in Australia is demonstrably false. Two productions reviewed in the same issue have women directors (MTC Judith Alexander, Perth Playhouse Marianne McNaughton). Elizabeth Alexander directed another current MTC production *The Marsh*, Kerry Dwyer directed the world premier of *Tigers at the Pram Factory*, Nana Nagle another of the Perth's 1979 productions. *Fairing in Love* Melbourne's list over the year would include Rose Mitchell, Larra Forber, Jay Youlden, Marc Hoban, Mona Carleton, Noel Byrne, and Sydney's list, headed by Doreen Warburton and Dore Faxon, must be equally current.

Australia's women directors would undoubtedly more appreciate word and recognition than workshops! Any chance, Nimrod?

Yours sincerely
Tony Watts,
Melbourne

after one week

Why do local audiences show so little interest in the work of local playwrights?

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

Go

by Norman Kenell

As 1980 draws to a close, we can look back on a generally rewarding theatrical year, one marked by much good new Australian writing and an exciting upsurge of originality and quality in fringe and alternate theatre.

Sydney's darkest moment was the loss of George Miller's Music Hall. The Ensemble Theatre came under similar threat, but happily there seems hope that with Premier Neville Wran's intervention common sense this time will prevail. It is pleasing to tell that in response to the Nimrod Theatre's appeal to all other companies for help fighting the Taxation Department's demand for \$80,000 back taxes on the manufacture of sets and props, the first generous cheque came from the Ensemble — and on the very day it had been told of the Board of Fine Commissioners' recommendation that it be closed down immediately.

On the brighter side, it is pleasing to have our two commercial theatres ending the year with long-running musicals performed by 99.9 percent Australian casts. (Sole exception is the delightful American singer, *Moss Richardson* in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.) *There's a Party* (our Song) will continue at the Theatre Royal till late December, *Wherever* at Her Majesty's well into January (*Love* comes in there in February).

Except for the abridgement of *The Merry Men of Windsor*, it has been a triumphal first year for Richard Whorren and the Sydney Theatre Company. Still to come (at the time of writing) is *The Precious Woman*, by Louis Nowra, a brilliant writer yet to achieve a major popular success, but the company's year was highlighted by the memorable *Crimo de Bergerac*, with John Bell in the eponymous role, and such subsequently commercial successes as Bob Herbert's *No Names*,

No Peck Drill and Simon Gray's *Close Of Play*.

The Nimrod, on the other hand, suffered an unaccountable minor eclipse which all must hope will be dispensed by David Williamson's new play, *Crushed Heroes*, opening December 3. Best of the year at the Nimrod, in my book, were Tom Kennedy's *Radio's House* and Stephen Sewell's *Troopers*, a flawed play, but well done.

The Ensemble scored strongly with such successes as George Hatzichristou's *No Room For Dreamers*, soon to have an Australia-wide tour, and Ronald Ribman's *Cold Storage*, with Brian Young turning in the year's best performance by an actor. Jane Street too, had one of the year's best efforts with John Clark's superbly detailed production of Solomon Asch's *The Dybbuk*.

The newly-launched King O'Malley Theatre Company at the Stables Theatre got away to a flying start with Rob George's *Lord Flaubert's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys* and John Upson's *The Warriors*, with two more new Australian works to follow, the Q Theatre sustained its reputation throughout the year with quality drama at Penrith and ripe comedy at Bankstown, the handsomely refurbished Marian Street Theatre scored with Somerset Maugham's *The French Winner* and Willy Russell's *Fanny Crayle* and is winding up the year with opera star Rob Stevens and Patsy Hemingway in *Ami Me Rave*.

The Bull 'n Bush continues at it plush new home in Kings Cross with the *Good Old Bad Old Days*, starring the brilliantly versatile Garth Maude, together with the perennial Noel Brophy and Barbara Wyndon, Neil Bryant and Suzanne Dudley.

Looking forward a bit, in the planning stage at the Manly Music Loft, where the Toppino Family have been since March and will continue till late January, producer Bill Orr has a new show tentatively titled *Over There* which he is writing with Peggy Montaine — with a little help from David Sale — and which Peggy will direct. It will be the first time she has staged a show in which she is not appearing. It'll be a three-hander built round popular wartime songs and possible performers are Margo Lee, Ron Fraser and Lee Young.

The Performing Arts Year Book of Australia

Vol 4, 1979, Published 1980

No wonder that at the well attended launching at the Opera House Reception Hall, the volume's more than 500 pages of text and pictures and its 41-page index, listing by my count some 9000 names of plays and playmen in theatre, film, television and concert, was described by guest of honour John Bell as an epitome of national pride.

Norman Kenell
Theatre Australia

The introductions to the various sections by such writers as Jill Sykes (ballet), Anthony Buckley (film), David Cyger (opera) and Shan Benson (radio drama) are well-informed, erudite, exposed and succinctly sum up the state of the art during the past year.

Margi Freeman
The Australian

The extraordinary record of the details of professional performing arts presentations around Australia.

Jill Sykes
Financial Review

Its reach in life is most definitely the coldest tablet of those thousands of artists documented as having done something for someone, somewhere, and at some stage of 1979.

Malcolm Francis
Sydney Entertainer

The book was supported financially by Shell Australia, The Australian Film Commission, the various Boards of The Australia Council, Roy Grundy and the Elizabethan Trust, but it is still a private enterprise publication, and a brave one, a vital one for Australia's producers, directors, artists and managers. If we don't support it, we don't deserve it.

Andrew L. Orben
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INTERN

Inhumanities

by Irving Wardle

For collections of theatrical news this has been the best autumn in living memory. Hardly had the *Oleanna* Marchés faded from the headlines than it was succeeded by the even sadder affair of Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* (Oliver). This being a National Theatre show it was accorded the full-shock-horror treatment, with a photograph of a hideously shadowed Celtic made on the front of the *Evening Standard*, and an upcoming investigation by Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Squad. The whole episode was a classic example of how those things happen in England (and perhaps with you as well), starting with complaints by Mrs Mary Whitehouse, our leading atomic bomb-bitch, who of course had not seen the show, and threats to withdraw the theatre's grant by the leader of the Greater London Council Sir Horace Culliv, who of course vehemently denied all imputations of cowardship. For as long as we still have the time for these ridiculous charades, and the winds have spare to splash them, I am convinced that the old country is not yet going under and in the meanwhile, as always, the criss of outrage have done the Home Office a power of good.

All of which defers the real moment of denouncing the play itself. What most infuriated our moral guardians was a display of ancient Roman bugger performed upon the marriage portion of a transsexual Druid, previously once playing made Scotland with his brothers in the pre-Roman Golden Age of S&M: Golden for them, that is. Not for their slaves. Not so for the Irish fugitive who wanders into their territory and is hauled upside down up a tree to have his clitoris cut. After a few such events it seems no bad idea for the Romans to make it and sort things out. Though when they do arrive, it is only to substitute colonial for tribal atrocities.

I think the play is a mess, but it deserves better than to be received with a dismissive sneer. In design it is a huge anti-colonial parable running from Caesar's Britain and the Arthurian myth to our own times, and presenting the Roman and Saxon



Michael Byrne as Julius Caesar in *The Romans in Britain*

ATIONAL



Joan Plowright in *Days in the Mountains*
London

reunions and the British domination of Ireland as all parts of the same picture. It takes a writer of unusual courage to tackle a work on that scale and without any doubt Breton possesses a black diving vision of history that has given him the energy to follow it through "What nation" asks one of the modern characters, "ever learned from the sufferings it inflicted on others?" True enough, likewise the converse statement by a dispossessed Celtic girl, standing alone on the ruined fields he sowed before the modern British soldiers arrive: "Home is where I have a stone in my hand."

At such moments the play enters a cave of harsh poetry fully in keeping with the epic subject. But such moments are few. Otherwise there are extended passages of anguished-telling rhetoric, and (more damaging) a compulsive resort to images of daggers, which lodge the impression that the writer is gazing over the very things he is denouncing. Structurally, the columnar equation is a constant source of confusion: at one is required to view the same (or simultaneously in Britain and Ireland, and the echoes of *Winning for*

Gods) from another comic distraction from the matter in hand. Michael Bogdanov's production is at its best in passages of laconic anachronism. "Three little wags," murmurs an armchair-placed Roman on spotting the hanging Celts. But it often fails. Breton is conveying the physical acoustics of the ancient world as where a desperate fugitive is seen fighting for his life with a woolly toy dog, or a group stand convening over the body of a stinking plague victim. The figure of Caesar is a real achievement, both for Breton and his actor Michael Bryant: he appears only once in a scene expertly constructed to show off his charm, authority, dynamism, vulgar sense of personal destiny, and total detachment from the sufferings he is inflicting; at one moment the costume form up behind him so as to allow the god-like leader to extract a tooth at private. However, Caesar is Breton's sole departure from his rule that "The history of the world can do without psychology and without choice: it is just action." On the evidence of this piece, that seems a bad rule.

Alan Bennett's *Days* (Vanderbilt) offers another example of a fine writer attempting a work beyond his range: though at first glance, the subject seems anything but ambitious. We are at home with Willard and Constance, an old married couple, in "the last back-to-back in Leeds" which is due for council demolition. Will, incapacitated by a bus-and-a-half driver, broods on the days when "I had an man under me." Constance is obsessed with hygiene and has trouble remembering things. "My mother lost her memory, I think." This afternoon lark goes comically as they are interrupted by the arrival of an official observer, sent round by the council to study typical local behaviour (with the well-measured purpose of understanding the lives of those who are to be rehoused). Under the eye of this unspeaking figure, Constance and Will start performing. They try to put a good face on things when their tart daughter announces her departure to Saudi Arabia, when a hoodlum pees through the letter box and bursts in and runs the old man's nose into a pornography magazine. The moments escalate: ending in insult and punishment. By which time, the sad affliction of the opening scene has been overtaken by a sense of rage against the commonplace inhumanism of life in this country. But

rage against whom? Partly against them and bureaucrats, but also against play-rights who exploit such material for a night's entertainment. This truth Mr Bennett sets some extremely clumsy signposts (the observer, for instance, turns out to be the couple's long-lost son-in-law) Lost for time. *Days* is the work of a master comic stylist, even if he is inclined to credit the simple Yorkshire pair with his own gift for elegantly balanced scenes. It is also beautifully played by Colma Hanksy and Joan Plowright. But, as in Bennett's last work, *The Old Covenor*, there is a growing tendency for self-criticism to overtake social criticism: which may be a morally admirable private position, but which looks in public like a failure of nerve.

Comic revolutions

By Karl Lavett

Comedy has ruled the opening of the New Year season — comedy with revolutionary themes. But don't expect any theatrical explosions — the revolutionaries are surprisingly limited in the subject matter.

The leading contender for radical status is Steve Tesich's *Driveway Story*. Mr Tesich has previously had limited success Off-Broadway, but now with the braces for his screenplay *Driveway* (also running in his own car, he has returned this time to Broadway. And with his lively and original vision he is most welcome. Broadway needs all the new blood it can get.

In *Driveway Story* Mr Tesich has taken a popular topic of contemporary interest: whatever happened to the motorgs' radicals when the movement died? Mr Tesich's daring concept is to present this as a farce. His hero is a burnt-out radical seeking obscurity as an insurance agent in Chicago. An unfortunate newspaper photograph blows his cover and brings his old comrades out of the woodwork.

Mr Tesich has conceived a wonderful mélange of farcical characters: a black ladylike who happens to be Polish, a former wife whose dialogue principally consists of song lyrics, a Serbian restaurateur who throws bombs, a milkpoo

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Derek Jacobi in *The Seaside*

divorced lawyer who is a failed flautist, a young prostitute who pleads the cause of promiscuity, a former Black militant who becomes a female cop because the women's movement is "where the action was!" Each of these characters is given a set-piece aria that shows Mr. Trench at his comic best.

Farce, however, is a devilishly difficult form, and not one that sits comfortably in American comedy. Farce's twin demands of precision and structure seem to have made most American comic writers shy away. Also farce has no time for sentimentality, a feature which makes American playwrights even more nervous.

Comic tension is not lacking in *Divorce Street*. As well as his zoo of characters, Mr. Trench shows his concrete zones of physical address. What he is unable to do is to put all these things into a logical and precise structure. Scenes are too long, characters repeat their comic efforts. A large blue period should be Mr. Trench's next purchase; generous running could not help but bring out the farce's better points.

Each cast member takes the opportunity the playwright hands them, with John Lithgow, the hero, at his rampled comic best providing a solid base for the chaos around him. Even if this is a comic's eye of a lion, Mr. Trench deserves brown points not only for effort but also for achievement.

While *Divorce Street* is a comedy about revolution, *The Seaside* is indeed a revolutionary comedy. Written by Nikolai Erdman in 1932, the play was clearly anti-Stalinist and as such was banned by Moscow censors, remaining unproduced in the Soviet Union to this day. Although Erdman lived until 1978, with this play he did in fact commit theatrical suicide. It was his second play — and his last. The rest was

he intends to shoot himself and as a result is besieged by every dissatisfied group that seeks a martyr. It is a satire of man at odds with society and how he views his survival. *The Seaside* is a young man's play, complete with awkward transitions, but also filled with a young man's passion and fantasies.

James Jurnian has chosen to emphasize the formalist element. Santo Loquasto's set heightens this effect with scaffolding, doors, walkways, ladders, it looks like a fun house gone mad. It succeeds in being both amusing and frightening at the same time. Jurnian has a bag of wonderful tricks that enhance the production. My favourite is the gypsy band that emerges from under beds when music might seem appropriate.

It is sad to report then that all this invention is undermined by the play's



John Lithgow & Debra Monk in *Divorce Street*

silence.

As if to compensate for the intervening years, suddenly U.S. productions of *The Seaside* are springing up like mushrooms. As well as the Broadway effort, productions are planned this season for Washington, Chicago and New Haven. The original American production was done in Providence, Rhode Island by the Trinity Square Repertory, which Adrian Hall has made into one of the best regional groups in the U.S. The director at Providence was James Jurnian, a Lithuanian who was highly regarded in the Soviet Union until his dissident activities earned him his walking papers.

With an entirely new cast, Jurnian makes his Broadway debut with *Seaside*. Also making his Broadway debut is Derek Jacobi, suddenly known to American audiences through *A Christmas Carol* and other Public Television vehicles.

Erdman's comedy is a political parable about an unemployed soul who announces

costing. With the notable exception of Mr. Jacobi and one other (John Holloman) the large supporting cast is just not up to the brilliant style which the genre requires. The lack of depth and technique in many Broadway supporting players has never been as exposed as on one night sitting. Nothing is of a piece and the energies of the play and the director are dissipated.

Mr. Jacobi is like Gulliver in Lilliput. The play requires he go from Mr. Average to Hero and on the way there's a whole catalogue of emotions and styles to be demonstrated. What an expressive stage face he has! There was a suspicion in the early scenes of shamming, but as soon as the heroic qualities emerge he is on surer ground and takes the play in his own hands to make it his own.

Let's hope that *Divorce Street* and *The Seaside* aren't the only revolutions, come or otherwise, we see this season. Every good play should come to the aid of the Party.

DANCE



BY WILLIAM
SCHNEIDER

American ballet — La Bayadere

When American Ballet Theatre last presented Natalia Markarova's staging of The Kingdom of the Shades some from Marius Petipa's *La Bayadere* back in 1974, audiences, critics and dancers alike agreed that here was a work as cherish, a tantalizing ballet except that was very much of its time and a thing of beauty forever.

The palace had been prepared before hand. The Leningrad Kirov feared Yungmars's version of the same scene to the West in 1961 and Nureyev had restaged his interpretation for the Royal Ballet in 1964, but American audiences took Markarova's version to their hearts and where uplifted.

Very much the same opinion was evoked of a little muted when ABT presented the entire ballet as adapted and reorchestrated by Markarova, earlier this year in New York and which is now touring regional America.

The euphoria was a product of audiences at last being able to see a full performing version of a ballet that many had thought was all but lost (in the same category as Petipa's *La Corvise* and *Fille du Pharaon*).

The work is still before the eyes and minds of the public only through the extraordinary efforts of a number of people over the years. Markarova's version issues from that of the Kirov, which was in turn a child of the version created by Chabukiani and Pyadov Lapokov. The West only has the Shades scene by virtue of the music memories of Markarova, Barashnikov and Nureyev.

The acid test of the ABT version will be whether it can stand up to scrutiny on tour and in successive revivals. I fervently hope that this is the major work that the ABT will be bringing on their projected Australian tour next year.

There are those who have said that the Shades scene is the best thing in the ballet



and, choreographically all that is needed. But to think that is to perilously understate the importance of tradition in ballet as well as to discount the function of structure in the narrative of a full length work.

For my money, the complete *La Bayadere* is a major acquisition for any company and a necessary addition to anyone's understanding of the history and vision of ballet.

Markarova has transposed certain parts of the ballet as created by Petipa and filled in many of the holes with her own

choreography, but the amendments make for a more fairly divided weight of choreographic interest and development throughout the unfolding structure of the piece.

There is a lot of music in the first two acts but it is overstated by the convoluted plot of what is basically a sort of Oriental Grief. The story of *La Fille du Destin* has got nothing on that!

In short *La Bayadere* tells the story of a humble Temple dancer, Matsya, and Solor, a young warrior who are in love. The high

Prince of the temple declares his love for Nikiya and the rejects him. Meanwhile Solor agrees to marry Gamzatti, a princess. The High Priest finds out about Nikiya and Solor and tells Gamzatti that he will not let her get a name like that in Hindu India. Nikiya is killed by a cobra planted in a basket of flowers by Gamzatti. Nikiya dies. Solor is filled with remorse, takes to opium and has a dream of Nikiya in the company of the Tibetan Afterworld (the Kingdom of the Shades). He refuses to marry Gamzatti, the Temple falls into ruins, kills practically everyone, quick cartoon and that, as they say, is that.

Markarova restored the grandiloquent lost act to be faithful to the original Petipa story as staged in 1877 (the same year as the original *Soir de Fete*). Vaganova's version copied short in the Shades scene which left the work up to the air.

Markarova describes her version as being "more mystical and religious in feeling. It's a ballet about love, death, punishment and religion." It is also a very spectacular production costing more than \$100,000. American. The music is by Ludwig Minkus as reworked and conducted by John Lanchberry. The sets and the costumes are a kaleidoscopic mass of brilliant colours, flames, gold, green and turquoise in glittering Eastern materials, silks, paraloons, peacock leathers, silk embroidery and precious stones. It is very, very opulent, or, as the Australian Ballet Administration would say, sumptuous. Costumes are by Thomas Ackridge and sets by Perleage Samarin.

But what is important is the changes that Markarova has wrought. In Petipa's original for example the part of Solor was divided between two men? Les Ivanov did the more for most of it and Pavel Gerdt did the big wedding pas de deux.

Markarova reinstates one dancer and moves the Wedding pas de deux from the last act to the second. She herself alternatively takes the roles of Nikiya (in classic ballet style) and Gamzatti (in more and character dance part) but she is unable to get over the problem of continual blurring of these two women and this makes her part of the difficulty in accepting the work's plot. She gives the corps plenty to do in the "new" acts: temple dances, war dances and so on. She is to be thanked that she has given the role of Solor a lot more fleshing out in cooperation with her original Solor, Anthony Dowell.

Of greatest interest though is the opium smoking scene for Solor, after Nikiya has died. It gives dramatic reason for the appearance of the Shades since Solor falls into a drugged trance and dreams of them; and is in keeping with the rich orientation of the entire work. Whatever one may for and advance in the rest of the ballet, the *Kingdom of the Shades* remains the

showing achievement of the ballet and arguably Petipa's greatest creation in music movement.

What one must remember is that the Shades is an idealised vision of Paradise, but a very 19th century Paradise. Order and Symmetry is all. There are 32 "Shades" in the scene and every one of them must come onto the stage individually with an enchaînement of *pas arabesque* provided with a huge back bend. One by one they must make their entrances, all 32 of them, repetition after repetition, until a sense of other-worldliness captures and the audience is literally hypnotised by the mirror images. If you wanted to be Romantic (and you must be in a work like this) you could call the entire entry a sort of choreographic mantra. All individuality is washed away and what remains is the scenic beauty of an entire pattern.

It is a poem in otherworld, full of choreographed linkings, garlands and groupings, yet the sense of consciousness must remain. Think of the Dryads scene in *Don Quixote* or the Wiles in *Giselle* Act 2 and you may get some idea.

As I said it is a 19th century choreographer's idea of Paradise and only the most dreamily dogged Idealist would refuse to accept it on its own terms. It is a sublime moment in ballet. Australians may have seen the scene when the *Korov* toured it here in 1972 and those that saw *Jarvis* *Pointe* may remember it from the opening ballet scene in that film.

Solor has dreamed this up to as to be reunited with his beloved Nikiya. It is only a dream of course and he can no longer have any real contact with her, but Petipa would never have allowed such a scene to slip by without setting a pas de deux and he does so, solving the difficulty of a meeting of two worlds by having Solor and Nikiya dance with a long veil to symbolise the vanishing thread of their association.

It is a very grand and so convincing and always superbly danced (when I first saw the ballet) by the originals Markarova and Dowell. The business with Markarova's extremely Russian grandness of manner and she makes the most of it, but the greatest joy comes from Dowell, who, bottomless, though a brilliant technician, always struck me as puffed. Here he gets the full measure and scope of the Romanticism, the big gesture and full body line. Other ones like that of Marianna Tchernikova and Fernando Ruyanova, dance it in their own way, grand and fully stretched, although Ruyanova is hapless as an actor.

The whole work is a major triumph for the ABT. "Act 1 places great technical demands on them, especially the girls in the corps, it a Bayadere is what makes the ABT one of the greatest ballet companies in the world today. It also tells me why the Australian Ballet is, internationally, very much league indeed. I feel sure it could never handle La Bayadere with anything approaching the conviction and ability it would demand.

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OPERA



BY DAVID
STYER

Opera in very fine form

A superb new production of *Boris Godunov* proved to be the unequivocal highlight of this year's summer season at the Sydney Opera House.

Aided by a magnificent Boris from Donald Shanks and an outstanding Marina from Heather Begg, director Elgar Mozhukin came up with a remarkably coherent reading of an inherently fragmented opera, saved both by excessive length and an excessive number of principal characters who cannot be pruned out without grave loss to the musical integrity of the piece.

Mozhukin's overall concept of the piece heavily underscored its built-in contrasts between the over-suffering Russian populace and the tyrant who ruled them in pre-revolutionary times. It exposed graphically the terrible dichotomy in their lifestyles as well as the personal failings of the opera's two central power figures, the incumbent Tsar Boris and the Pretender Dmitry.

In so doing it concentrated on Boris' inner anguish, for instance, rather than the pomp and spectacle that usually dominate the coronation scene, and as a result it tended to disappoint those familiar with *Boris* only as a big spectacle overflowing with rich melodic invention and massive vocal sounds.

The low life scenes of this *Boris* were even more memorable than the high life ones for their brilliant visual imagery, blood being tossed to the starving populace in the first scene of the prologue, a miniature flock of real chicks in the scene at the inn on the Polish frontier, the huge cannon aimed straight at the audience on which the pretender rode in during the last scene.

Donald Shanks was in fine form as Boris, singing at his very best and masterfully impressing dramatically. He conveyed perfectly the self-torment verging on

self-hatred on which this production focused. Heather Begg was an absolutely marvellous Marina, getting across satisfyingly the personality and motivations of the character despite the fact she appears in only two of the nine scenes of the opera as performed (all but the St. Basil's scene appeared in this production).

Gregory Dempsey turned in a fine performance, as always, as the pretender and Robert Card was a memorably snarley and devious Shinsky, aided by marvellously off-balance costuming from John Bury. The supporting principals scarcely have an opportunity to make much of an impression in *Boris*, an opera where the chorus in fact has more exposure than any single principal — and the Australian Opera chorus rose to the challenge quite memorably, as did the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra under the baton of Edgar Hewarth, making his debut



Donald Shanks as Boris Godunov in the QOC's production

with the company as was designer Bury. It is to be hoped that both return soon.

It was also an event month in Queensland, with both the official State Opera company and the aspiring Queensland Light Opera Company presenting overlapping seasons of two works. Aided by the common box office appeal of Donald Smith and Margaret Elkins in the title roles, the QLOC production of *Saint-Saëns' Samson and Delilah* was far and away the commercial triumph of the month, though it left a great deal to be desired as a theatrical experience. Predictably, the singing was glorious, but the acting and the presentation were never more than adequate and sometimes disaboli-

Far and away the most satisfying of the month's Brisbane productions was the QOC's *Don Pasquale*, reviewed in these columns last month, which was conducted by Georg Turner — who also, of course, conducted the *Samson and Delilah* in which the excellent vocal work of Smith and Elkins was supplemented unexpectedly (so far, at least) by an engagingly sung High Priest from Robert Dowe, known to me previously only as a concert/antenna singer.

Sadly, however, David Macfarlane's production and Max Hurley's cast did a good deal less than full justice to the work itself on the vocal aspects of these performances. There were practical difficulties in the presentation of the famous seduction scene, where the music cries out for something soft for Delilah to recline on but she and Samson were perched instead on the marble-tile edge of an ornamental rock garden, and the denouement, one of the most potentially spectacular scenes in all opera, was not brought off with anything like the impact it ought to achieve in performance.

In support, the QLOC chorus shone, really but at no stage convinced dramatically, the only in not an indication capable of being sustained convincingly on stage by amateur, opera-oriented characters, no matter how well they can sing — and these Brisbane chorists undeniably do that very well indeed.

The whole QLOC operation was much more convincing in this overlapping season, when it tackled *The Pirates of Penzance*. It was almost a classic case of overkill vocally, with no less than three singers imported to sing leading roles in what after all is only a moderately demanding opera.

In absolute terms, this was a very good *Pirates* indeed, though the Brisbane connection was minimal in the principals department. Keith Redhead provided a nice Major-General Stanley, marvellously precise vocally in the neck-snapping department of short on vocal quality, and Beverly Sheen provided an impenetrable Ruth, amazingly full-voiced musically and larger than life dramatically in every good G and S dragon lady should be but so very usually are. Yet finally the whole show could and ought to have been cast in Queensland, that is was not quite some distance off the artistic perspective of the QLOC.

Both in Canberra and in Sydney, during the period under review, Rossini's *Barber of Seville* was being presented and it had the somewhat tedious task of trying to

two productions on consecutive nights with the same exponent of the role.

And it was an incredible achievement for the young Australian Opera baritone Gregory Yarrack, who was in the midst of singing no less than four *Barbers* in three days with alternate performances in Sydney and Canberra using different translations. And just to make things a bit tricky, Ronald Macdonald's production for Canberra Opera was quite different in detail from John Cox's for the A.O., as revised by Michael Beauchamp, and Yarrack had scarcely time for a briefing let alone an on-stage rehearsal before his first Canberra performance.

Perhaps it was just the increased adrenaline flow stimulated by the challenge of the grueling performance itself, but there was no doubt during either of the two performances I attended during this time that Yarrack was absolutely eating the part for breakfast, even in Canberra, where the audience might be expected to replace the singing local baritone who had been scheduled to sing was greeted with defiance bordering on downright hostility. Yarrack had the crowd won by the end of his opening aria. Mind you, there is scarcely a more effective entrance in all opera than Figure's, but Yarrack made the most of it and never looked back, on the night, in Canberra.

His local Ronsa, Margaret Sam, was also very good indeed though not an ideal build for the part which exudes slenderness, coquetry and a bit of fierce female belchiness. But it did not really matter, finally, that she was not quite right to look at for Sam sang and acted her heart out and ended up turning in quite a marvelous Ronsa all round.

Geoffrey Hanna also turned in a good Almaviva, though his voice lacks the ideal beauty the role really demands. But (twice!) he at no stage forced his notes and the result, though lacking here and there, was far more (and a performance than I have previously heard from Hanna and for that season possibly the most successful all round.

Also worthy of special commendation in this *Barber* was Bryan Dowling's Basilio, which had none of the dirty old man about it that so dispirited me a year ago when I reviewed his Count in the Canberra production of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* — or, rather, had no excess of dirty old man about it but rather the happy blend of comic parody and unobscured the ideal Basilio demands.

My one real disappointment was the unfortunate miscasting of John Wood as Barnato: the role really lies too low for him, and he did not come across quite right dramatically either — lacking the menace that ought to make him a serious obstacle

in the path of the quest of Almaviva for the hand of Ronsa. Richard McIntyre's musical direction was excellent and Peter Cooke's designs up to his usual outstanding standard, with an obviously heated budget.

Apart from Yarrack, the other *Barber* of my month was not finally very inspiring though it exuded promise through quite a few points. Stuart Chalmers promoters to be a real acquisition to the Australian Opera since his flamboyant semaphoric signals are understood more precisely by the forces under his command. Kathleen Moore, on the basis of her Ronsa in this season, has a long way to go before her realisation of the part could be termed convincing. In the other major cast change, Henri Witten's Almaviva got off to a disastrous start massively — he was extraordinarily off pitch in the serenade — but acclimated in quality rapidly as it went along, it blended well in the ensemble, and



Jeffrey Hanna as Puck in A.O.'s *Mohammet Night's Dream*.

finally was quite acceptable dramatically.

Britain's *Al Mohammet Night's Dream*, on the other hand, was even more successful in its brief run at the tail end of the Sydney season than it had been when originally staged at the Sydney Opera House in 1975. Most of the cast was the same, not to mention the conductor, William Reid, and the whole exercise seemed that fact in a most positive way.

The ensemble was tighter, the orchestral playing more assured, the audience more responsive and less prone to stoop out during intervals than before. That there were only three Sydney performances before *The Dream* was carried off to make its equally brief Melbourne debut before returning for another Sydney run in the 1981 summer season meant that the audiences for them were no doubt stacked with British addicts, but no matter — any potential British converts who may have attended ought to have gone home happy

as well.

The main cast change was the introduction of Anthony Warlow in the vital (though non-singing, of course) part of Puck, he was even better, finally, than the original Puck of this production, Jonathan Hyde, for the extra dash of malevolence he conveyed and the extra dash of physical levity he brought to the role.

The other ensembles, all excellent, were John Fullard as Demetrius, Beryl Farlan as Helena, Brian Martin as Theobald and Henry Prichard as Snout. But finally the most memorable performances still came from the old hands: James Bowman as Oberon, Neil Warren-Smith as Bottom, and Graeme Ewen in Puck and even more Thane in a marvelous orange-red night wig doing his balancey little jig at the very end.

Last in the period under review, Lyndon Terracini made a welcome reappearance in Melbourne for the Victoria State Opera in Hans Werner Henze's *El Comendador*, a role he performed with great distinction at the 1976 Adelaide Festival and in Sydney about the same time though the piece had not previously been seen in Melbourne. This year's performance, matured not only by the inevitable passage of time in the life of a relatively young performing artist but by some direct outlay from the composer himself, was audibly different from my recollection of the original — much less demonstrative physically, more probing and introspective psychologically. Less exciting but more subtly effective — at least to those who had seen it before.

The more intimate venue of the Universal Theatre, in inner-suburban Ferntree Gully, had its pluses and minuses, finally, they cancelled each other out and not forced the general feel of the performance reported above that of muted power rather than naked, raw animal aggression.

Finally, I must reluctantly take my farewell of *Therese Alcazar* readers with this article — with something of a sigh, for I have appeared in every issue to date and covered to the best of my ability the sometimes turbulent national opera scene in these columns since August 1976.

But in my after-ago as editor of *Opera Australia* I am now able to say all I feel I ought to say about the Australian opera scene, and I feel it is time to retire gracefully from these columns and give someone else a go, for there is, of course, no truth or falsehood in criticism of the performing arts — only a number of wares, all hopefully articulate and informed but none bearing any special claim to recognition as Truth with a capital T.

I look forward to reading the views of my successor in these columns and hope that many of my present readers will feel inclined to continue to follow my writings in *Opera Australia* as well.



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*Celluloid
Heroes*

JOHN BELL

As I look at that quaint green and red box that is Nimrod standing sturdily among the debris and rubble and saluted by the honks and fumes of the passing cars, I feel a freshness, enthusiasm and sense of adventure that is strange after ten years of full-time slog. I feel confident that despite all the problems, the rising costs, the winds of change, Nimrod will survive, will grow, improve and remain an indispensable and major force in Australian theatre. When I walk into the crowded foyer of an evening, into the offices or dressing rooms, I feel the same sense of enthusiasm from the audiences and the people who work here.

Enthusiasm has always been Nimrod's greatest primary asset and although it has flagged at times, its resurrection is always possible as long as the whole staff feel involved in the process of making theatre. This process is an ever-changing thing and "what the theatre is about" is our most constant topic of debate. I have always avoided being pinned down to a declaration of policy or manifesto. Besides being invariably pompous, manifestos are useless and limiting. I see the theatre as a place where things can happen but what those things are must be decided at a specific time by the people who are there at the time. Unless there is an atmosphere of potential change and constant revolution, the theatre has started to die. In our early days our programming was deliberately starting, so that people never knew what to expect of us next. I think that our programming over the last few years has become all too predictable, it's time for more changes.

Over the last ten years we have done an average of seven Australian plays a year. Our original aim was to provide an Australian "way" of doing theatre, using broad slapstick humour, the traditions and times of the *Tivoli* or *Sonker* tent show. Text was the



least important component. Then in our second year with scripts submitted by Williamson, Buzo, Romani and Hibberd, our attention swung more on to the Australian writer, who was busy reproducing the Australian sound and dishing out a bit of social criticism.

Over the last three or four years we have encouraged writers to get away from the domestic into epic territory and writers such as Louise

Norris, Stephen Sewell, and John Anthony King tend to produce large canvases rather than what Sewell calls domestic snapshots.

This exploration of large themes, big events and a more daring theatricality will be, I hope, a preoccupation with Australian writers for the immediate future. We want an audience coming to Nimrod to find the use of the space (not just the stage) exciting and confronting. We are all over familiar with the worn-out old cliché about giving the audience "Something they can't get on TV", but it's remarkable how many playwrights don't look any further than the small screen and realise the potential of an empty stage.

The Nimrod productions of the "classics", notably Shakespeare, have been, despite heaps of criticism and controversy, a large part of our success. I couldn't exist in a theatre without the classics. Granted the importance of creating new plays, you have to step back occasionally, take a long distance look at what makes theatre. A theatre without classics is like a man without a memory. As an actor and a director, I need to be reminded of the disciplines of shape, technique, articulation. Audiences enjoy seeing the new plays and the classics noshet off each other, the new writing given form and definition, the classics given a sense of contemporaneity and localisation. Nimrod has benefited enormously by the constant mix of classics and new plays.

In my own approach to the classic plays, one of the things I have most deliberately set out to do is replace the "English" way of doing them with a way that is our own. I have grown used to the howls of those critics and academics who loath this approach and want their Shakespeare "straight". What they mean is they want it done as in London in the 1940's. Funny enough if you were simply to take a Nimrod production of Shakespeare and stick it in

1970/71

BIGGLES

ENDGAME

MACBETH

FLASHJIM VAUX

THE ROY MURPHY
SHOW

CUSTOMS &
EXCISE

THE DUKE OF
EDINBURGH
ASSASSINATED

THE REMOVALISTS

AFTER MAGRITTE

HAMLET ON ICE

BIGGLES



Elizabethan costume on an "historically accurate" set, most of the critics would pipe down, because they don't look past the externals and what they really want is their classics, and, by inference, all their "cultural experiences" at a safe distance, handled reverently like bone china and displayed on a shelf next to the Bible.

At the same time my own criticism of our productions of the classics is that they have relied too heavily on design to make the statement. I should like to strip back the design component putting a lot more of the onus onto the actors. I'm not saying that's a new idea and I am not denigrating the designer's contribution to a production. But occasionally it's time for a shift of emphasis.

I suppose everyone tends to see a theatre as belonging to him personally. Is a "Director's Theatre" any better than a "Designer's Theatre"? Should actors or writers feel that there is the most important contribution? What about those mime and musicians who say it without words? And what of the lobbyists who despise and condemn everything as "irrelevant" that does not preach their own point of view?

Any one of the above theatres can exist independently, but a place like Nimrod has somehow to make room for all of them, now giving one a hearing and now somebody else.

It is an anomaly that, up till now, actors have not had more say in the shaping of Nimrod. All Company policy, ideas, criticisms are aired at a weekly meeting attended by the full staff, but since we have not had an acting company as such, actors' interest in the proceedings was transient at best. Now that we have begun to form the nucleus of an acting company and actors are employed full-time, I hope that their ideas and proposals will begin to take effect.

Who is Nimrod's audience now, after ten years? Regrettably, the youth component is not as large as one would wish. But I refuse to get too sentimental about that. I

cannot remember a time (in Sydney at any rate) when the theatre was ever patronised by a predominantly youthful audience. Theatre has always tended to be a thing you settle back into, with middle-age. We are doing our best to combat that attitude, and, slowly, I think we are making headway. It's going to have a lot to do with choice of plays obviously, but also a good deal to do with ticket prices and the feeling of Nimrod as being friendly and accessible. Is it a trendy audience? We have been stuck with the "trendy" label for ten years now, but as far as I am concerned, any trends who have stayed the distance are welcome. It was also regarded as "trendy" to



put on plays about prisons and aboriginals. "Next thing," moaned one critic, "they'll be doing a play written by a whale."

Is it a subscriber audience? Only to a small degree. Subscribers make up 30% of our customers, or a two weeks' audience for an eight week run. So while they are a welcome addition to our audience they do not represent it significantly or condition the theatre's reflexes.

More than most companies, I suspect, we have a floating and

ever-changing audience. I hope it stays that way, and that we are able to cater for a wide variety of choices.

While not being in any sense a community theatre (a difficult thing to do in our geographical situation with a large Lebanese, Turkish and Greek local population) we are endeavouring to provide services of a non-profit making kind to all kinds of groups within the community. Among these are the free performances of all our productions that we give to prisoners, students, and unemployed people, the teachers' workshop to assist drama teachers in schools, and a workshop for women directors, aiming to encourage ten women this year to further their careers in directing for stage, film and television. Our free public readings of new scripts (usually eight or ten a year) has been of use to playwrights but in this area we are seeking extra funds to support longer, more thorough working of new scripts than the one day rehearsal method we have employed up till now.

So, as I said at the beginning, to me right now the future looks full of adventure and promise.

The stranger feeling is that of looking back, with a sense of wonder that we survived at all. When we blithely throw open our stable doors at Nimrod Street without a penny in the world we weren't looking ten years ahead. How amazed we were to be given the lordly sum of six thousand dollars by the Australian Council for the Arts to allow us to continue for a second year, having got through the first unaided. Thanks to Ken and Luan Horler, Nimrod came into existence. Thanks to all our staff and friends (and particularly John Mealy, Tony Gilbert, and Mr Justice Hope who have been on our Board from the start) we are in our present building and battling on. Running a theatre is a risky business, and we've seen companies collapse, others start up and fizzle away. But I hope that what has been a success story for Nimrod will give heart to the others who must eventually grow up alongside us.

ON YER MARX

ON YER MARX

ON YER MARX

ON YER MARX

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ON YER MARX



HARRY KIPPAX

This tribute to Nimrod on its tenth anniversary will not survey its work in detail nor discriminate between the contributions of John Bell, Ken Horler and Richard Wherrett, its ruling triumvirate for nine years. Its concern is the nature of Nimrod's role and distinction in the revival of Sydney's theatre culture.

First, to put it in perspective:

The theatre revival, growing out of the aspirations of the Fifties, has spanned two decades, each with its special character. The preoccupations of the Sixties were increased subsidies for the indigenous theatre, the concentration of these in permanent, professional, regional institutions, and the raising of standards.

Standards are not abstractions. To pursue them in practice you need perceptible models. Inevitably the Sixties looked for models to the influential, pervasive English theatre. That preoccupation gave the Seventies their cue, as the feeling grew that the advances of the Sixties, though admirable, were falling out of step with the developing spirit of new times, a new nationalism vehemently questioning traditional values and imported models.

In theatre this disaffection had its first urgent expression in Melbourne's Australian Performing Group, which nourished Hibbard, Romani, Williamson and Oakley. In Sydney, it produced the dissatisfied minority audience to which Nimrod addressed its appeal.

Increasingly the preoccupation of the new decade became the redirection of professionalism, and the readjustment of standards, to reflect the local reality. That preoccupation suggests the nature of Nimrod's distinction. It lies in its very influential contribution to the search for a valid, indigenous theatre style.

For Nimrod that search began, ironically, on the Kensington campus where Bell, after formative years in England in the Sixties, returned to work at NIDA, the Old Tote and Jane Street. At Jane Street in June, 1970, he directed "The Legend of King O'Malley", by Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis. Immensely successful, it was the



prelude to Nimrod, which opened the doors of its tiny, converted Darlinghurst loft on December 2, 1970. And it was the overture to the Seventies.

Here, vigorously stamped out, was the new wine of the new nationalism, and it was intoxicating. Not because of its form, a picaresque narrative as drawing as an outback camp-fire yarn. And not because of its "total theatre", others had already given us that.

It was intoxicating because of its

easy, natural unmistakable Australian "accent", finding, beyond vowel sounds and vernacular, the pitch, tempo and expression marks of a unique mode of utterance, one which here looked backwards to Tivoli vaudeville for its form and momentum, and backwards, too, satirically to raw jingoism and the militarism of W. M. Hughes to make its points about the contemporary scene. It created, single-handed, an Australian theatrical genre which is still alive and kicking up its heels.

Our concern is with Bell's indispensable stylistic contribution. His production swaggered, as the bush ballads did, in action it cartwheeled, showing off its theatricality with the strut of Bondi life-savers and the bounce of VFL high-flyers. But in utterance it was as terse, laconic and sardonic as Henry Lawson, as contemptuous of illusion as it was of romance.

Its style was as Australian as a gumleaf. It became the foundation of the Nimrod style, and the springboard for its development. What is the Nimrod style?

Began with the Nimrod personality. The foyer, first cramped at Darlinghurst, but with the congestion usefully eliminating the pomp and circumstance of a "society", rather than a social occasion, egalitarian, informal, a confessions, open-necked, short-sleeved affair. This atmosphere survived the move in 1974 to the larger spaces of the new converted theatre at Surry Hills. The congestion diminished, but the maleness remained, enhanced by the bar.

The auditorium, next at Darlinghurst it was as cramped as the foyer, with crowded, hard, uncomfortable planking, but it brought players and audience face to face — for collaboration or confrontation. Involvement was the name of game. To see Martin Harris beaten to death in "The Removalists" was to assist at a murder in your living-room. It gave a shock the little television screen could not match.

The Darlinghurst involvement factor also survived the move to Surry Hills (after an uneasy

1973

PRESIDENT
WILSON IN PARIS

HAMLET

THE CHOCOLATE
FROG & THE
OLD FAMILIAR
JUICE

TOM

A HARD GOD

THE SUMMER OF
THE SEVEN-
TEENTH DOLL

THE MARSH
KING'S DAUGHTER

HAMLET

KASPAR

THE TOOTH OF
CRIME

KASPAR



beginning), chiefly because of the admirable though still unprofitable proportions of the larger auditorium and the way the tiered circle of audience embraced the playing space. There, as at Darlinghurst, pretension, attitude, dishonesty, and deception thrived in the intimacy. Performance was everything, illusion nothing.

It follows that there was no condescension. Here we pass from Nimrod's personality to its philosophy. It is an easy step — from the informality and egalitarianism of its atmosphere to entertainment directed to popular, all-class tastes, with a bias towards youth, Pop and bewdy. It has never been overtly didactic. (When it got round to Brecht in 1979, in Horle's absorbing "Galileo", the stress was on the play's humanity, not its message). It has never been a cultural mission-house or educator. Its temper was sceptical, not reverent, its method, pragmatic whatever the cost to orthodoxy. It was a child of its time.

And yet — a key to its success — it was never inhibited or circumscribed by that time. It was a leader of taste, not a follower, using Pop not submitting to it. It was never a prisoner of its own orthodoxy nor of a cult — even at Darlinghurst where cult-practices were strong.

Its history makes this clear. With its shoestring budget it relied in its early years on local scripts. It began by exploring "O'Malley" with Bell productions of "Biggles" by Boddy, Marcus Cooney and Ron Blair (high-spirited, but uneven and derivative) and "Flash Jim Vaux", a ballad-play by Blair harking back to convict days, an assured success. So far, in the wake of "O'Malley", predictable.

Thereafter Nimrod left the "O'Malley" genre to others (Steve J. Speers' "Young Mo", directed by Wherritt in 1977, is an exception) and passed to farce (Alexander Buzoi) and — the beginning of a prolonged, fruitful association — to David Williamson's macabrely realistic social fable, "The Removalists", in a Bell production that Harry M. Miller later sent round Australia. That was in October, 1971, from then on Nimrod never ceased to be a force. And rarely became predictable. "The Removalists" came from the

APG's Prism Factory. What has been said here might suggest that the APG was Nimrod's model. Not so, they were different. Nimrod served notice as early as March, 1971, that, unlike the APG, it would not restrict its content to the local scene and its emerging generation of playwrights. After "Biggles" it did "Macbeth".

What could Shakespeare, staple of the Tide and English cultural export par excellence, contribute to the new nationalism, to Nimrod as an "alternative theatre", to an Australian theatre style?

The answer, nearly everything. For the best test of the relevance and validity of an indigenous style is not simply its capacity to mirror the local society with veracity, important though "the shock of recognition" may be for self-examination. That is a limited, a parochial achievement.

The test is to relate that style to the whole range of drama,

spect, seems as important, as a contribution to style, as its expression, which in Shakespeare married the Granville Barker tradition of speed, lucidity and vigour to the Australian practice of these qualities pioneered in "O'Malley". For concept, Nimrod looked inwards to its audience and their interests.

"Macbeth" foreshadowed the things to come. It was done by Bell with a cast of seven, mainly from the "O'Malley" team, as a concerto for Macbeth and six players in all the other parts, with the role-changing powerfully reinforcing the text's motifs of hallucination and deception. It was done as a black mass (the Manson analogy was to hand), with Macbeth at the very beginning embracing witchcraft, with the murder of Duncan as a ritual of damnation, with the victory of Malcolm as a ritual of exorcism. It was engulfing.

What was "Australian" about all this? Why, the brushing aside of the personal history of a great man (here, damned from the beginning) and the concentration upon the nation, from his actions, of his country. This was Scotland's ordeal, not Macbeth's tragedy. Moreover, it had a happy ending. Urrromantic Australia is an optimistic country. And it suspects great men.

Bell's "Measure for Measure" the following year took its cue from the popular distaste for woe-serism and gave us the Duke and Isabella as Victorian prig and prude. A perversion? Critics can argue about that, what was compelling was the way in which this rejection of the "morality" element in the play released its humanity, with the flawed, unhappy figures of Angelo and Claudio becoming valid objects of pity.

In Shakespeare, cutting through to, and making palpable, the "unaccommodated" humanity in the plays has been Nimrod's abiding concern. In a Nimrod landmark, the Bell-Wherritt "Hamlet" of 1973, with Bell superb as the Prince, the production brushed aside the politics and religion in the play, excoriated the Ghost as far as Hamlet is concerned, ignored the aristocracy of the main characters, to give us Everyman's paralyzing grief and bewilderment in a human crisis prolonged by muddle and misunderstanding. The approach



especially its masterpieces, to elicit from their universality what is of immediate, urgent interest to the local society, and, in so doing, confront that society with the wider, abiding horizons of the world and its history and its cultures.

From "Macbeth" onwards the classics, mainly Shakespeare, have been central in the experience offered by Nimrod. How did they work? The conceptual approach, in retro-

1974

JESTERS

CORALIE LANS-
DOWNE SAYS NO

BACCHOI

THE SEAGULL

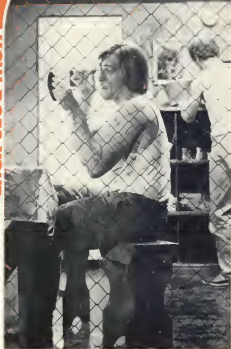
WELL HUNG

KOOKABURRA

HOW DOES YOUR
GARDEN GROW

MY FOOT MY
TUTOR

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW



OPPOSITE PAGE: JESTERS; THIS PAGE: CORALIE LANS-DOWNE SAYS NO; HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW; KOOKABURRA; MY FOOT MY TUTOR

was one of charity, leavened with common sense, for among mortals it avoided sentimentality like the plague.

The Nimrod approach to Shakespeare has had its limitations and defects. Insisting on the recognisable humanity in the plays, it trampled on the courtliness of their aristocratic societies (Messina in "Much Ado" and Verona in "Romeo and Juliet" became small towns, with bourgeois lordings of over peasants). Searching for fun, its Pop mannerism incongruously caricatured Shakespeare's common people.

Its approach persistently shortened and simplified Shakespeare's world.

But the all-important achievement, the Nimrod approach brought that world, however incomplete, triumphantly back into theatre as a popular art. The Nimrod audience palpably loved "their" Shakespeare, with his malarky Australian accent. Splendidly ambitious ventures like the 1978 "Henry IV", which only a few years earlier would have seemed box-office folly, were packed out.

II

Nimrod's decision to stage classics alongside new Australian plays at Darlinghurst is to move, finally, from its philosophy to its policies in practice, only one aspect of its eclecticism, its Australian readiness to give plays of all kinds "a go".

Turning away from the proven "O'Malley" genre to Buzz and Williamson, both to become Nimrod stalwarts in association, respectively, with Horler and Bell, was only the beginning of an adventurous course of dedicated championing of contemporary Australian playwrighting remarkable, probably unique, for the sheer variety of its offerings.

In the two years after "The Removalsists" it gave mordant sociological comedy (Buzz's "Corolla Lansdowne Says No"); psychological drama (Alma de Groen's "The Sweetproof Boy"); *jeux d'esprit* in macabre (Blair's "Woodrow Wilson in Paris" and Michael Cowie's "The Jesters"), and "pieces of life" and realism (Jim McNeil's "The Old Familiar Juice" and Peter Kennau's "A Hard



GORDON CHATER IN "THE CLUB"



God") — and all of them were successes.

Such variety, circumventing pigeonholing labels ("a Nimrod play"), it might be thought, must have adulterated the Nimrod identity and image. Not so, these were secure in its style. On the contrary its variety enriched its character. Surprise became an expected part of the Nimrod experience.

Its Darlinghurst survival and success could be explained by cult

support, albeit untidy. The test for Australian drama came with the expansion to Surry Hills and the need for larger audiences. Would larger audiences support a diet of local plays relayed only by Shakespeare?

Nimrod must have had qualms. It opened the new theatre with new departures, a Pop version of "The Bacchae", a failure, and its first fling at Chekhov, "The Seagull", which also misfired. In the event, its only concession to broaden its appeal was to add contemporary overseas successes to its menu. Shakespeare and the local men remained the staple.

And brilliant were the results, seen as a whole — not just from the established playwrights like Williamson ("The Club" and "Travelling North" had premieres at Nimrod) but from newcomers like Steve J. Spears (whose one-man "The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin", directed by Wherrett and with great acting from Gordon Chater, went round the world) and Louis Nowra ("Inner Voices", "Inside The Island").

Nimrod deserved its successes. They flowed directly from its eclecticism, opening its stages to all comers with talent, regardless of their tastes and predilections, from its courage in backing its judgment, and its relish in "having a go", and from a sustained professionalism which made it a magnet for many of the best actors we have — from veterans like Gloria Dawn, unforgettable in "A Hard God", to newcomers like Peter Carroll (the former NIDA teacher who took Blair's "The Christian Brothers" around the world).

Success flowed, above all, from the sheer entrepreneurial enterprise, nerve and flair which added Downstairs to Upstairs, hosted the Peter Brook company, tempted a visitor like Steve Berkoff to direct his "Metamorphosis" at Nimrod, launched successes interstate and overseas.

Amid such energetic, multi-farious activity, purpose and direction might easily have become lost. If they were not, it can be suggested, it was because Nimrod remained true to its personality and its philosophy, its style. Style, Gielgud said, is knowing what play you are in. With Nimrod it was knowing what country it was in. And showing us

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

1975

GINGER LAST
STAND

THE RIDE ACROSS
LAKE
CONSTANCE

NO MANS LAND

YOU WANT IT
DON'T YOU BILLY

THEY'RE PLAYING
OUR SONG

PERFECTLY ALL
RIGHT / THE JOSS
ADAMS SHOW

MATES & THE
CHRISTIAN
BROTHERS

THE FLOATING
WORLD

RICHARD III

MUCH ADO
ABOUT NOTHING



GINGER LAST AND THE RIDE ACROSS LAKE CONSTANCE, NO MANS LAND, YOU WANT IT DON'T YOU BILLY, THEY'RE PLAYING OUR SONG, PERFECTLY ALL RIGHT / THE JOSS ADAMS SHOW, MATES & THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS, THE FLOATING WORLD, RICHARD III, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

RON BLAIR

There cannot be an Australian theatre without Australian plays — the idea is so simple as to have been overlooked time and again. How often in the past have various established Australian theatres paid only lip service to this before going ahead and buying yet another farce from the West End!

One might also say that there cannot be an Australian theatre without lots of Australian plays failing to please — success is rare in the theatre, a golden lode after many barren claims.

We began the Nimrod largely out of frustration with the Old Tote's cautious policy, even though the directors of that theatre were, at the time, most careful to hedge their bets and "lend support". It is amusing and instructive to read again the passage that was the nearest the Nimrod ever came to a manifesto.

"The tradition of the Australian theatre is noisy and vulgar. It is appropriate that the warehouse which is now Nimrod Street Theatre should have been a stable, a gymnasium and a Sunday

school. Nimrod wants new Australian plays. We believe that only new Australian plays and contemporary treatment of the classics will bring audiences back to the theatre."

As soon as it was possible, the Nimrod began to organise subscription tickets. This seemed a good way to build a secure financial foundation and hold a

following. But we all know the dangers of such plans, too many subscribers means the theatre starts to become timid about the kind of plays it does. It finds itself having to "please the subscribers."

Currently, Nimrod's subscription audiences amount to something like 40% of total attendance. When I was talking to one of the directors recently about doing even more Australian plays in the main house, he murmured that he had to think of the subscribers. The talk is starting to wag the dog.

Nimrod began not as a political theatre, but one with an emphasis on liveliness, noise and vulgarity. We were all largely children of the middle classes. We wanted to earn our living in the theatre and, yes, show our parents, who wanted us to be barristers, that what we were doing was worthwhile.

We've done that. But now, as we all start kicking forty over the next few years, we shouldn't forget that we, who made the Nimrod, made the theatre first and the subscribers followed. It wasn't the other way around.



NIMROD AND THE OZ PLAY

Nimrod's commitment to Australian writing has always been a priority when planning its programmes for both the Upstairs and Downstairs theatres.

In defence of our commitment, it should be noted that in 10 years, we have produced 79 Australian plays (including revivals) out of a total of 126 productions, and below we list those Australian writers and co-writers whose work has been produced over the last ten years at Nimrod.

David Allen	(2)
Helmut Bakke	(1)
James Balogh	(1)
Ron Blair	(8)
Michael Boddy	(3)

Richard Bradshaw	(1)
Greg Bunbury	(1)
Alex Buzo	(7)
Jennifer Compton	(2)
Marcus Cooney	(2)
Aileen Corpus	(1)
Michael Cove	(2)
Rex Crawford	(1)
Jim Crawford	(1)
Alma De Groen	(4)
Bob Ellis	(1)
Gary Foley	(1)
Tim Gooding	(1)
Dick Hall	(1)
Moya Henderson	(2)
Jack Hibbard	(2)
Margot Hilton	(1)
Ken Horler	(2)
John Huston	(1)
Thomas Keneally	(1)
Peter Kenna	(2)
John Anthony King	(1)

Rudi Krausman	(1)
Ray Lawler	(1)
Robert Lord	(1)
Zac Martin	(1)
Bob Maza	(1)
Jim McNeil	(4)
Robyn Moore	(1)
Bryan Mason	(1)
Louis Nowra	(2)
Mil Parni	(1)
Bill Read	(2)
John Romeril	(1)
Dedre Rubenstein	(1)
Steele Rudd	(1)
Geoffrey Rush	(1)
Stephen Sewell	(1)
Tony Sheldon	(1)
Steve J. Spears	(2)
John Summons	(1)
Lloyd Sutter	(1)
Tony Taylor	(1)
Bird Williams	(1)
David Williamson	(5)
Eleanor Witcombe	(1)
John Wood	(1)

**DAVID
WILLIAMSON**

The Playwright... A mechanical engineer turned Playwright, wrote several University reviews before writing his first full length play in 1970 **THE COMING OF STORK**. His next two plays **THE REMOVALISTS** and **DON'S PARTY** were written in 1971 and first performed by the APG. **THE REMOVALISTS** and **DON'S** Nimrod in 1971, and Nimrod and David shared the prestigious George Devine Award for new

playwriting — the first time this award was given outside Britain. **THE REMOVALISTS** was also performed at the Royal Court, London, in 1973 resulting in the Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and New York. After a season in Sydney **DON'S PARTY** went on an interstate tour before opening at London's Royal Court in 1975. Four plays followed in quick succession — **JUGGLERS THREE** (1972), **WHAT IF YOU DIED TOMORROW** (1973) which later toured to London's West End, **THE DEPARTMENT** (1974), and **A HANDFUL OF FRIENDS** (1976). Nimrod's production of **THE CLUB** opened in 1977 and toured to Canberra, Melbourne, two

seasons at the Theatre Royal Sydney, St Georges Leagues Club, and finally to London's Hampstead and Old Vic Theatres. John Bell's production of **TRAVELLING NORTH** quickly followed up the success of **THE CLUB** with sellout seasons at Nimrod, Theatre Royal Sydney, and the Athenaeum Theatre Melbourne. David's film scripts include **STORK**, **PETERSEN**, **THE REMOVALISTS**, **ELIZA FRASER**, **DON'S PARTY** (AFI Best Screenplay Award) and **THE CLUB**. In 1978 David spent five months as writing professor at University of Aarhus in Denmark. He has just finished working on the screenplay for Peter Weir's new film **GALLIPOLI**.



ORLANDO, FLORIDA (AP)—A major effort to



100



1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

JOHN BELL

The Director... is well known to Nimrod audiences as actor and director. Sydney University Honours graduate before joining the Old Tote Company in 1963. Associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company 1965-69. Upon returning to Australia he directed the original production of **THE LEGEND OF KING O'MALLEY** at Jane St Theatre and then co-founded Nimrod with Ken Horler in 1970. Nimrod productions directed by John include **MACBETH**, **MEASURE FOR MEASURE**, **MUCH ADO**, **FLASH JIM VAUX**, **INNER VOICES**, **A HARD GOD**, **THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**, **THE VENETIAN TWINS**, **ORESTEIA**, and David Williamson's **THE REMOVALISTS**, **A HANDFUL OF FRIENDS**, **THE CLUB** (which subsequently toured to the Hampstead and Old Vic theatres in London), and **TRAVELLING NORTH**. Acting performances include Arturo in **Uncle Vanya**, Sam in **LOWER DEPTHS**, for the Old Tote, **Hamlet**, **Richard III**, **Prince Hal** in **HENRY IV**, **Hatch** in **THE SEA**, and **Volpone** for Nimrod, and **Cyrano de Bergerac** for the Sydney Theatre Company.



LARRY EASTWOOD

The Designer... Co-founder and for seven years production manager and designer for Nimrod. Has designed more than forty productions for Nimrod including **HAMLET**, **THE REMOVALISTS**, **TOOTH OF CRIME**, **RICHARD III**, **MUCH ADO**, **JACK**, **COMEDY OF ERRORS**, **JUMPERS**, **THE SEA**, and **THE ELOCUTION OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN** which later transferred to London, New York and San Francisco. Larry's other theatre design work has included productions for the Old Tote, Melbourne Theatre Company, Ensemble Theatre and Peter Williams' productions of **TRIBUTE** and **THE GINGAME** at the Theatre Royal. Larry has recently completed seven months work as Art Director on **A TOWN LIKE ALICE** for Channel 7, and is currently working on a **CABARET** television series.



GRAHAME MURRAY

The Lighting Designer... Began theatre career in New Zealand with New Zealand Ballet and Opera Companies as an electrician, before crossing the Tasman to work the Sydney season of **BOYS IN THE BAND**, followed by 3 years with the Old Tote as Head Electrician and 7 months in the Off Broadway Scene. He toured extensively with Prospect Theatre Company throughout the U.K. and abroad before taking up a position with the Pitlochry Festival Theatre in Scotland as Resident Lighting Designer. Positions then followed with Greenwich Young People's Theatre as Production Manager for 18 months and numerous West End productions before returning to Australia. In Australia he toured with **THE ISLAND** and **SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD**, **BOESMAN AND LENA** then joined Nimrod in 1976 as Production Manager. For Nimrod he has lit over half of the productions since that date.



KATE FITZPATRICK

Graduated NIDA Theatre — Old Tote Little Monsters, The Legend of King O'Malley, The Importance of Being Earnest, Season of Sorrowful Joy, Boy's Arts Theatre SA, Hamlet, Macbeth, Harry M. Miller, The Rocky Horror Show, Naked, Shadow of Blood, Kennedy's Children, Gang's Last Stand, Ride Across Lake Constance, AET Bedroom Farce, Paint Theatres, Nations, Sydney Theatre Co, The Lady of the Camellias, Seymour Centre.

Brilliantous Television includes — Red Heat, Bonny, Norman Lindsay Saved, Behind The Legend, That Was The Year That Was, Bend Sin! Trial By Marriage, Skyways, The Night Nurse, Players to the Gallery, Fire, Office Politics, The Promised Woman, A Salute to the Great McCarry, Summer of Secrets, The Remnants, By Night, Gary's Story, The Auction.



JOHN GREGG was born in Tasmania and was a student of NIDA in its first year. After working with the Melbourne Theatre Company and doing two ABC-TV series *Contrabands* and *Cats* he went to London in 1971 where he was a member of the National Theatre Company and appeared in many television plays including the much discussed BBC-TV series *The Giltfingert*. He returned in 1978 to do two programmes *A Place In The World* and *The Oracle* for the ABC. He returned to U.K. to do a season with the New Shakespeare Company, but has now settled back here permanently with his wife and family.



France: The *Grand Prix du Meilleur Film*
Inspector Morand (1974) *Golden*
Award 1975 *Golden*
Thames Co. (France)
Bergend, S. (France)
Merry Wives of Windsor
Nimrod, Maritino Toward
Rock-Ola (1974) *Golden*
The Bush (Australian Arts
Award) Television: Gary
Gangster and Two Girls and
a Millionaire (BBC-TV) *Ed*
Solomon Show (USA) Film
Had Dog Morgan Co. The
Box: Four The One,
Gentlemen's Hall



KEVIN SMITH: Interest in theatre began with the Black Theatre in Redfern and while there he did a film-maker course funded by the Aboriginal Arts Board. After completion he worked as a unit assistant manager on Phil Noyce's film *Backroads*. Kevin has worked as a Project Officer with the Melbourne Aboriginal Community Youth Support Scheme organising workshops in crafts of various cultures as well as drama groups. Kevin played Wally in *Thomas Kennedy's Buller House at Renard Upstairs* in early 1990.





BARBARA STEPHENS. Theatre credits include — St Martins Theatre: *The Anniversary, Battle Spirit, The Servant, Jane Street, Dancin' Party.* South Australia Theatre Company: Member of acting company 1973-78, appearing in many productions including *Games After Liverpool, The Joss Adams Show, Rockery Nook, Occupations, Dharma, Battle Spirit, Comedy of Errors* and played Karen in *Jugglers Three*. Nimrod: *Trevachies*. Theatre Royal: *Bed Before Yesterday*. Television: *Who Do You Think You Are, Run From The Morning, Because He's My Friend* and played Myra in ABC-TV's *The Department*. Film: *Touch And Go*.



PETER SUMNER. Theatre — Community Theatre: *Two For The Scepter*. Ensemble: *The Real Inspector Hound, Old Tote, Cher Nout, The Importance of Being Earnest, Abigail & Heloise, A Doll's House*. Nimrod: *A Handful of Friends*. Television: *Trial by Marriage, Galspore, The Department, Players To The*



Gallery, Neutral Ground, A Touch of Reverence, Captain Cook, Cop Shop, The Bad Touch, Lukas Kingdom, Eye of the Spiral. Human Target Film: *Ned Kelly, McManus, Colour Me Dead, Millions Will Die, Star Wars, Chair of Jimmy Blacksmith, Middle Age Spread, The Survivor*

HENRI SZEPES. Studied drama at the Ensemble Theatre before appearing in musicals, television, as a stand-up comic in the clubs, and two years as Harold in *The Boys In The Band*.



England 1971-74 appearing in Tony Richardson's production of *I Claudius*, and was with Prospect Theatre Company for 18 months. Appeared on numerous British TV programmes including *Misleading Cases, Goldie, Barlow, Strauss Family, Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*. Theatre in Australia includes — Ensemble: *The title role in The Good Doctor, Prisoner of Second Avenue*. Nimrod: *Comedy of Errors, Jack McTearish in Gone With Hardy, and Saul in Travelling North*. Theatre Royal: *Tribute Television Say You Want Me* (1981 nomination Best Supporting Actor). Vincent Shaddan in *Ride On Stranger, Toast To Maiba* and a new comedy series *Daily At Dawn* to be screened on ATN 7 in February 1981. Most recently seen as Bernie in *Sexual Paranoia* in Chicago and Reunion at Nimrod Downstairs, and as Zrich in the film *Patty Fan*.



ALAN WILSON. Theatre — South Australia Theatre Company: *Comedy Of Errors, Bride of Gospel, Paddy Jane Street, My Shadow and Mr. Menen St. Candide*. Music Hall: *Treasure Island, Lost to the Devil, Old Tote, Equus*. Adelaide Festival: *The Cassidy Album, QTC, Point of Departure*. Television: *Seven Little Australians, Loss of Innocence, Kirby's Company, The Gracie, Doctors Down Under, Young Doctors, Time/space*



KATE STEPHENSON, HENRI STEPHENSON, BARBARA STEPHENSON



ALAN WILSON, JOHN CROOK, PETER HENNER



ALAN WILSON, BARBARA STEPHENSON, PETER HENNER, JOHN CROOK

**...anyhow*
have a
Winfield 25's**



**Five
smokes
ahead of
the rest**

THESE ARE THE COSTUMES, THIS IS THE SET, THIS IS THE CONCEPT, NOW YOU'RE ALL FREE..

Before announcing plans for a 1991 Company of Actors, Nimrod decided to ask a few actors how they would define an "Actors Company" from just a group of contract or rep players. An edited transcript of their discussion follows. The actors involved were Cathy Downes, Drew Forsythe, Colin Fieles, Jennifer Hagan, John McTernan and Tony Sheldon.

JOHN: Would anyone like to start. Jenny's had a lot of experience at the MTC and Colin at the SATC and Nimrod and Drew at the Old Tote. Did you ever work in a Company in New Zealand?

CATHY: Yes. I worked with Downstage Theatre.

JOHN: Did you Tony?

TONY: Hunter Valley.

JOHN: Yes and I've had a year here, so we've all had some experience working in a Company. Who would like to start off and say what they found lacking from that experience?

DREW: What I've generally found is that Companies have been too small and so too much work, and too much of the shit work really, tends to fall on the same people, too much of a load. By the second play you're exhausted.

JENNY: That's right. Yes that was one of the things on my list, that if you're rehearsing all day and playing at night, you really get played out in the end, and you have nothing left to contribute.

COLIN: But really there hasn't been a Company yet. All there's been is a repertoire of plays or repertory work.

JOHN: Contract players.

JENNY: Well another grievance of a Company, is that people make hell if they're doing all the shit work — medium size parts and small parts — and the pickings go to people who are brought in on a once and that creates an awful feeling.

JOHN: So you're saying that if you want to be in the Company then you want to know in advance some of the roles you'll be playing, and hopefully those roles will be extending roles.

JENNY: Yes definitely.

CATHY: I remember, John, you saying in a Nimrod meeting last year, that if you have a tight Company, the whole energy is working together as a Company, that you gauge plays on the people that you have in your Company, and vice versa. Then that can be a very extending experience, both in terms of the roles that you play and in becoming familiar with the actors that you're playing with.

JENNY: Yes, you link with the management, and know where they want to go, instead of with a lot of Companies, they say "We'll do MacBeth" and then think "My God we haven't got a Lady MacBeth".

JOHN: So should those actors in the Company have some say in the policy of that theatre in picking the plays?

COLIN: Absolutely. It's essential.

TONY: But do actors read as many plays as people whose job it is, say the management, who know more about what's happening and coming up?

COLIN: Maybe that's because actors are victims of the whole system. That the agents system, the casting system, the whole conventional set up of the theatre and we're conditioned to do plays that we're told to do or asked to do, because that's all that's happening.

It's just a rep system, because you work day and night just rehearse and play and don't do anything else. I mean if you're going to have a Company you've got to have a musician, a writer in residence, designer.

TONY: Do you think managements think sometimes in terms of a Company getting their audiences in to see the same people and building a rapport between those Company actors and the audience.

DREW: There's also an argument against that too. A lot of people say, that people get bored with seeing the same people over and over again. I don't agree with that argument. I think actors should be versatile enough to do many different roles, in interesting ways, and to appear quite different each time, and the fact that they're doing that should excite the audience.

CATHY: It's important in that case that the actors aren't cast in similar type roles.

COLIN: But that goes back to the fact that you've got to be given a breathing space with a Company. I've just done 3 plays in a row, by the end of 3 you don't really want to do another one.

JENNY: There is no input, no recharging.

JOHN: What about a repertoire system, when some of the plays are done again?

COLIN: That can be a very good idea.

JOHN: Rehearsed with the same people. Improved upon.

DREW: I've only done that once and that was the Opera House opening — we did Three Penny Opera. I found it terrific by the time we did Richard II and got round to doing Three Penny Opera again we were really excited and looking forward to doing it.

JOHN: How much time do you think it takes to form a group of people to get a really ideal working relationship?

DREW: That can vary. I think the best thing that can get a group together is success. For example The Venetian Twins, it was on in 5 weeks and it felt like a success to us.

JOHN: It had a strong Company feel about it.

TONY: I think that was also dictated by the form of the show — with the Twins there were ten people all making an equal contribution to the show, whereas some shows you have three star parts and six others — that doesn't help the Company feeling along.

JOHN: Well that's what I want to bring up. In this group do you need a strong leader?

COLIN: Directors. Yes. Absolutely.

JENNY: You inevitably need someone (it's terrific for months and months for us all to contribute) but there's got to be a time when everybody's on stage and you need that person out front.

TONY: It's also a very personal attitude though that a lot of actors don't like to be directed by other actors — they don't feel they're getting direction. They say "I want someone to blame, someone to argue".

JOHN: Is that fair to blame a director? It is I suppose if that director has imposed a production on you, but if you've contributed to that production in an equal part with every other cast member and the director, then you all take the blame or the success equally.

DREW: Yes well I'm not saying that necessarily means you don't have a director but sometimes (an awful lot) a director has a concept about how we're going to do this and he's done so much advance work and comes in on the first day "these are the costumes, this is the set, this is the concept, now you're all free" — then your responsibility is to make his concept work.

JOHN: So in this ideal Company all the actors would be in on all that pre-work.



THE ELOCUTION OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

1978

TRAVESTIES

THE SPEAKERS

ALL OVER

KENNEDYS
CHILDREN

MARTELLO
TOWERS

MATES & THE
CHRISTIAN
BROTHERS

ARE YOU NOW OR
HAVE YOU EVER
BEEN

MAD BAD &
DANGEROUS TO
KNOW

THE RECRUITING
OFFICER

THE ELOCUTION
OF BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN

THE DUCHESS OF
MALFI

A HANDFUL OF
FRIENDS

DIRTY LINEN

DREW: It should be in the play and then understanding the play so well that if a concept happens it has evolved out of the play and with each member of the cast.

COLIN: But there is no "ideal". You don't really know what a Company is going to be until you start working it. That's why I think it would take a number of years.

TONY: What Drew was saying is actually "Group Developed Theatre". It is what the APG has been doing for ten years. That thing where everybody is in there and probably rewriting as it goes along.

JOHN: But that can really backfire. I don't think Theatre

works well as a democracy. One man/one vote.

DREW: I regret a bit, that my job is always being decided by other people.

CATHY: Yes, I experienced enormous freedom when I was in London for a year and I started a Theatre Company and we were picking or writing our own plays and that was the first time I realised how stifled I'd been by the system. This didn't work either of course because it was a co-op (one man/one woman/one vote) and consequently not enough got done and there were endless discussions and that didn't work either. I mean what do we think of the Nimrod Company? What do we think of the one that is going to happen next year?

TONY: It's still 3/4 actors on permanent salary and everybody else brought in. It's still not a Company that is being drawn upon for every show.

JOHN: Is it possible for a theatre in Sydney to work the way that we're talking about? I don't know that it is. It's a great departure for Nimrod to go that way.

CATHY: I don't think it's up to Nimrod to go that way. I think Nimrod is probably working very well in the way it is but I think there is room for a Company in Sydney.

JOHN: The big problem with a Company like Nimrod is you've got to have something on every 7 weeks — no matter what. It is a continual compromise. Ideally to work for 5 or 6 months on one play is a rewarding experience but impossible for most theatres to work that way.

CATHY: I think you've got to have a deadline.

DREW: But sometimes — given a limited time to do it, the pressure will push you to something that is not the right thing and it is indeed a compromise. What I think would be the ideal situation is if you could say start with a show that is already a success, so that you could have your audience coming in and paying and keeping the theatre alive. Then with the next play spend say 2 months in just digesting that play without any idea of how you're performing it — sit down read it and talk about it, just maybe 3 times a week, for 2 hours, go over it, mull over, simply to understand it and then have a 5 week rehearsal time and at the end you perform and then the pressure was applied and you had to come up with the results. But you did it with the knowledge of the play. Hopefully it would be good enough to hold and keep in repertoire... and then you'd work on another play in a similar way.

If there was a way to have the time to digest the play then the director wouldn't have to have a concept. The drama would be so exciting that the audience would supply the concept.

COLIN: If you're forming a Company I think you have a duty to Australian writers too.

If a writer can work within a group, with a theatre, then he knows the space that he's writing for, he knows the actors, the people he's writing for.

DREW: You get to know those people and you get to trust those people, the more you discover with each other.

JOHN: Well what we're all saying is that we want more say in more areas aren't we?

DREW: I think it's essential.

CATHY: More time to really digest what we're doing.

JENNY: And you're not out on your own with that competitive thing of it's him or me. Every man for himself. I've found that awful thing of doing a play almost as if you're auditioning for the next one.

DREW: Just on that note, another point is that the actors have to be well paid and not over worked and that's why I think the company has to be big enough and therefore the company resources have to be big.

CATHY: I think that Nimrod are trying to not make the workload too heavy — they're trying to alternate things, so you are either performing or rehearsing, not both at the same time.

DREW: Yes I think they're aware of it.

JOHN: Do you think Nimrod as a theatre, next year or in the future, has a responsibility to actors in general — in other words a responsibility to develop good actors into better actors, so that they'll have a continual store of talented people to work with. Is that part of a theatre's responsibility?

DREW: I don't think you can say that. Not a responsibility to us — it is a responsibility to theatre.

JOHN: No I mean more than just saying "So and so will be good in that part so we'll use them". The responsibility to say "That actor needs that part at this time in his career".

DREW: Well I think they do.

JOHN: I think we as actors collectively have a responsibility to the theatre. So I guess I'm saying that if I'm treated fairly by a theatre, by the directors of that theatre in terms of my own growth, I'm certainly willing to say "Dinner served" in a play. I think we have to be open enough to say "I'll be part of the production because I care about the play — I care about this theatre doing it".

COLIN: A company has a duty to its audience then, hasn't it? What I mean is a company can shape an audience — by what your input is and what your goals are — then you can get a wider audience — surely it's possible in a city of 4 million people.

CATHY: It's time Nimrod stopped taking over from the Old Tote. Fulfilling the classical role.

JOHN: I think Nimrod will have to do more than just perpetuate itself. It seems to be doing that very well at the moment but not a lot else. It has an audience, it's putting on things, and they're coming to see them, but it doesn't seem to be forging out in any new area at all.

COLIN: But if you have a company then that's a company's duty.

CATHY: The advantages of working with a company situation as I see them are firstly getting to know your fellow actors for a long period of time, secondly, hopefully having more of a say in what's going on in your theatre, and thirdly getting to play more of a variety of roles than perhaps you would play in other spaces. Also the security of knowing that each role you do is not an audition piece for when you're out of work in four weeks' time, so you can serve the theatre and the play, rather than just serving yourself. Has anyone got any disadvantages?

DREW: ——— in saying out on films — not enough money — I think the answer is that Nimrod needs a lot more money.

JOHN: I think that the people who dole out the money and the audiences who pay at the box office don't realise that they could be seeing a much higher standard, a much better production. A lot of people would say "Well what does it matter — the theatre is full". I matters a great deal to me; the theatre will be full in either case, hopefully, but what those full theatres will be seeing will be of a much higher standard. That's what it's about.

DREW: Exciting the audience and ourselves!

CATHY: Well that is how to excite the audience surely — by exciting yourself.



INNER VOICES

1977

TREASURE
ISLAND

YOUNG MO
INNER VOICES

TRAVESTIES

TWELFTH NIGHT

BANANAS & THE
CORONERS
REPORT &
THE FLAW

MUCH ADD
ABOUT NOTHING

A STRETCH OF
THE IMAGINATION

GOING HOME

FANSHEN

JACK

ASHES

THE CLUB

CHRIS WESTWOOD

It is commonly said that Nimrod has sculpted a vision of Australian culture with the writings, productions, talents and energies it has so carefully fostered over the past ten years. But in combing through the decade's work, I can only conclude that the Nimrod vision of Australian culture is synonymous with "male", and find myself agreeing with Simon de Beauvoir's statement that,

"Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men, they describe it from their point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth"

In ten years at Nimrod, there have been no women directors of plays (although Cathy Downes directed herself in her one-woman show this year). There have been only three plays by women (including three one-acters, one children's play, and three commissions of other people's work) compared to a total of 122 plays by men. It is possible that if two such fundamental aspects of play production - writers and directors - are dominated by men, the proportion of women in all other "creative" areas in the theatre will be similarly unequal. Certainly, statistics reflect this: 214 female performers to 514 male in ten years at Nimrod. In those fields in which middle-class women have been encouraged by virtue of a "classical education" for young ladies - such as music and dance and design - I expected to find a good proportion of women. Sadly, the story there is much the same. Only in the so-called "service" areas (stage management, costume making, box office, production assistance, publicity, office staff) are women well presented.

I am not trying to shift home the entire blame to Nimrod. Most other theatres in Australia have similar or worse records in this Decade of Women. But, like an emulsion, Nimrod has to be shaken up now and then, to keep it flowing.

When I showed the female to male ratio of theatre work to people at Nimrod, some argued that the founders of Nimrod had every right to shape their theatre in whatever form they chose. This argument has a number of flaws.

First, it assumes that "the artist" has no social responsibility of any kind, an argument based on the myth that "artists" have some kind of messianic vision, a special creative genius, absolutely independent of their cultural and social environment, which allows them self-indulgence and detachment from the real world. Second, it denies the basic human right of equal opportunity in employment and equal opportunity in having voices heard and ideas expressed. Given Nimrod's "Progressive" reputation and "Egalitarian" politics, one might have expected it to respond to the impact of the women's movement a little more positively than it has. Nimrod may well deny that it is perpetrating a male stronghold and that there is



any discrimination, claiming that work is given to the best person available.

Yet creativity is not due to the chance birth of male genes, but rather opportunities afforded people to learn and develop through encouragement, schooling, experience, and contact with other artists - all of which would appear to be more available to men than women at Nimrod.

And in all of this, Nimrod unfortunately has been aided and abetted by voices of men such as

John Willett, who wrote of Nimrod in the authoritative *Plays and Players*.

One of the secrets of the theatre's success is that it has not been distracted by passionately left side issues, like feminism, but has continued to be ably or authoritatively led. Another secret surely is the intelligent catholic taste which gives the repertoire its variety" (July, 1980).

Syllogistic comments like this only serve to reinforce notions that "able", "authoritative" and "intelligent catholic tastes" are exclusively male prerogatives. Under the weight of such public male comment, it's a wonder that Nimrod has given any woman a chance at all!

In pointing out the top-sidedness of Nimrod's (and Willett's) approach, I am not suggesting that there is a difference between male and female creativity, but that their social experiences are different. Social experience is fundamental to drama, and it is high time that Nimrod stopped reflecting the world only through male consciousness. An Australian vision in theatre is surely as equally female as male. The chance to reveal Nimrod's biases and inadequacies is opportune. The theatre has a sense, right now, of entering a new era. All around it, initiatives to develop women's talents, energies and contributions to theatre are being taken. Yet, as Nimrod launches into its tenth anniversary season and its eleventh year, it runs with an elected Board of ten men, no women. It has no positive plans to use women directors and writers in 1991, even though Nimrod is hosting a Women Directors Workshop in November/December to promote some 8 women as directors on the Australian theatre scene. Clearly, Nimrod is entering its new decade still thinking in male vocabulary, still denying itself fruitful sources of artistic inspiration. I think that unless it does look to women, it may be left, high and dry, unbaking along with a desiccated collection of smug and complacent consumers who are equally monocular in their vision. What a massive loss to a powerful Australian theatre.



KOLD KOMFORT KAFFEE

1978

TREASURE
ISLAND

ROCK-OLA

EVERYMAN &
STUBBLE &
MAROISMS

CURSE OF THE
STARVING CLASS

KOLD KOMFORT
KAFFEE

THE COMEDY OF
ERRORS

HENRY IV

METAMORPHOSIS

GIANTS &
THE JOB

KOLD KOMFORT
KAFFEE

A VISIT WITH THE
FAMILY

GONE WITH
HARDY

JUMPERS

STEPHEN SEWELL

Writing about writing is one of the most vacuous activities anyone can engage in. Nevertheless, at the risk of making a fool of myself, I would like to use the opportunity of Nimrod's tenth anniversary to make a few observations which seem pertinent at this moment.

Theatre is a social product, and like all social products will reflect the broad tensions between the participants unless either an internal or external regime of repression is enforced. The hierarchical structure of most companies is an example of the former, the lack of anything but the most mystified discussion of the obvious links between politicians and criminals is evidence of the latter. But it is the principle rather than its violation which concerns me at the moment, and in particular the pernicious notion, sometimes shared by writers, that the content of our work is above criticism. When this is not simply an expression of cowardice or laziness, it becomes the radical assertion of the absolute independence of the play's content from the world, an assertion which robs the play of any communicative power whatsoever, unless it be at the level of those famous Universal Truths which are periodically trotted out to bring discussion to an end. The assertion that what we have to say is trivial, or simply an opinion among many which can be just as quickly dismissed, is a fundamental attack on our reason for being, and, more than that, a cynical assault on the value of rationality. I am not arguing that all plays are or should be primarily informative or, in the jargon which has been thrust upon us,

"intellectual." I am saying that every play is a reflection on the world, and that one has the right to ask "Is it true?". The assumption that one can uncover the truth amounts first and foremost to the assertion that there is a world independent of our minds. Its denial expresses itself neatly in the philistine rejection of content as a valid area of discussion.

If I have established the essential point that criticism and discussion of our work is central to our



activity as writers I hope I have succeeded in locating writers in society and in the struggle of ideas. We are not magicians who in the occult act of writing distil truth - Universal or not - from the ingredients of an impenetrable and esoteric world. We have no more right to claim an intuitive grasp of the world than those frauds for whom arrogance is a good substitute for thought. (Keynes' contempt for this notion with respect to politicians is just as applicable to writers.) "Practical

men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back." If this is reminiscent of the bankrupt social, political and psychological theories regularly evidenced in Australian play, the blame must in part rest with the writers who have distanced themselves from the debates which are calling increasingly fundamental aspects of our society into question. No writer, for example, has any right to plead ignorance of the issue of sexism, and any play peddling sexist stereotypes must be seen as an intervention of the most reactionary sort. This is not a question of Freedom of Expression or some such hypocritical nonsense any more than Nazi anti-semitic propaganda is. Our ideas don't circulate in an innocent world of their own. Sexist stereotypes are translated into raped women. We are responsible for what we write.

It is a commonplace to observe that the international economic and political system is in crisis. The abstract sounding phrase can be appreciated as meaning more or less massive unemployment, rising inflation, poverty, violence, confusion and instability in government and treasury circles, and war. The least important aspect of ignoring this situation, will be our condemnation to object irrelevance. The more important aspect - still within the narrow limits of the effect of such a decision on our writing - will be to cut ourselves off from critical thought, to retreat into a moronic world of private symbolism apparently immune to the storm about us and, as I have argued, to cease to fulfil the function which sustains us, that is, to cease to communicate. There is absolutely no reason why we should cease to be writers, but if we are to remain more than hacks or eccentrics, it seems to me clear that we are committed to a deep involvement with the forces which are transforming this society, and to much more besides.



VENETIAN TWINS

1979

TREASURE ISLAND

MAKASSAR REEF

HANCOCK'S LAST HALF HOUR

THE BASTARD FROM THE BUSH

ROMEO & JULIET

THE SEA

AMERICAN BUFFALO

GALILEO

UPSIDE DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

TRAVELLING NORTH

BETRAYAL

POTIPHAR'S WIFE + 2

THE VENETIAN TWINS

ON OUR SELECTION

BURLESCO

NEIL ARMFIELD

This issue of this magazine is essentially a statement of Nimrod's pride in the achievements of ten years. To grow within a decade from a small but committed group of idealistic theatre workers operating in a noisy, hot cramped stable loft into what is regarded by many nationally and internationally as Australia's most important theatre company is clearly remarkable.

However to continue to grow, or at least to continue being important, involves constant reappraisal of motive and action in relation to the social and cultural context within which a theatre lives.

The impact that Nimrod made during this last decade was very much a product of the strength and directness with which its attitudes were embodied in its products. With the Tote churning out a tired procession of English, European and American classics, Nimrod was a theatre asserting the reason for its existence. A new Sydney audience developed with the discovery that theatre could be refreshing, immediate and meaningful.

I believe it is more difficult now for our audience to feel Nimrod's attitudes and commitments than it was five years ago. And this, I believe, is because the pattern for our programming seems, season by season, to repeat the same formula.

It is argued that, for the purposes of flexibility, Nimrod should not be limited by a policy or manifesto. But this is only a real argument if that flexibility is being exercised. It seems to me that there has not been a more appropriate time to use our flexibility than at the present.

If we continue to include productions of classics in our repertoire they must be inspired by radical re-interpretations of text and style. They must in themselves justify their inclusion and communicate their relevance to an Australian theatre audience.



If we continue to produce contemporary work from Europe and America, it should be the most contemporary and most challenging of that work.

And if we continue to include either of those two categories of plays in our repertoire it must never be as a priority above new Australian work.

It is the work of 83 Australian writers over ten years that has been the principal contributing factor to Nimrod's success, and

yet only about one half of our year's work is Australian. I think Nimrod needs to make a bolder commitment to Australian writers. This involves not just producing more plays but working more closely with writers in developing scripts. If writers are accused of being locked away in ivory towers it is usually because our theatre companies have thrown away the keys. There seems to be little exploration and interchange during the process of play writing. It is no longer seen as remarkable for an Australian to write a good play but it still very much a chance occurrence. And after a writer produces a good first play a few commissions are sprinkled around and the writer is left alone to produce 2nd, 3rd and 4th plays packaged and ready to be fitted into the 4 week rehearsal system. Understandably writers often get confused, bitter or paranoid. Understandably the promise shown in an early play fades and the writer's scope and talent seems to diminish rather than expand.

I feel we must encourage writers to confront social and political issues relevant to Australia today. I don't believe in the division between "entertainment" and theatre which intellectually challenges. I believe it is true of audiences in general and Nimrod's audience in particular that the most rewarding experience in theatre, and the experience that makes you want to return, is one where you feel you have learnt something or where you have been moved to believe in or act upon an idea.

We look forward to a time, especially that there is now a permanent company of actors developing at Nimrod, when the work of our theatre will be as strong and as varied as the personalities and beliefs of every member who contributes to it. There is a lot to be done. Nimrod can be proud of the achievements of its first ten years, but it mustn't be satisfied.



TRAITORS

1990

PIRATES AT
THE BARN

BULLIES HOUSE

TRAITORS

THE HOUSE OF
THE DEAF MAN

CLOWNEROOMIES

CLOUDS

KRAZY FOR YOU

THE CASE OF
KATHERINE
MANSFIELD

THE ORESTEA

BACKYARD

INSIDE THE
ISLAND

SEXUAL PERVER—
SITY IN CHICAGO /
REUNION

VOLPONE

CELLULOID
HEROES

YOU AND THE
NIGHT AND THE
HOUSE WINE

KIM CARPENTER

by Kim Carpenter, Designer and Co-Artistic Director 1989

In the beginning all number ten Nimrod Street Kings Cross "Nimrod" created for itself an environment that exuded energy and potential excitement. That environment was abstract by its physical mishapenness, choice of yellow foyer walls, arresting poster displays and a distorted performance space for actors and audience.

The physical oddities were declared as a positive contribution to the use and presentation of productions during that time.

Visual memories of the old Nimrod make it difficult to separate the raw ad-hoc image of the building and its decoration from the more deliberate designs on the stage, it seemed one came through from the other.

Specifically two designs stand out in my memory — Peter Handke's *Kasper* (Designer Martin Sharp) and Sam Shepard's *Tooth of Crime* (Designer Larry Eastwood) both graphically very confronting. The latter made great use of the rickety staircase leading from the foyer to the auditorium by shunting the audience through a covered tunnel to their seats.

The penchant for defiant primary colours and geometrical patterns as well as rough circus elements constituted the basis of the Nimrod house style in terms of visual identification. This combination of tastes were those of the Directors (I trust) but more particularly Larry Eastwood who was the Designer as well as Production Manager at that time.

The use of strong colours and motifs which evolved during those early years eventually became synonymous with the Nimrod image, leading the way towards graphically identifying the old team with a new environment in Sunny Hills.

Martin Sharp's *Mo*, Ginger Meggs etc have contributed enormously



in consolidating Nimrod's public image. His use of crisp colours and paper cut-outs have influenced the logo colours and the theatre foyer style, and publications.

Jumping from a kitchen sized stage to a large open studio space took several productions before Directors and Designers began to understand the true problems and

possibilities of the new theatre.

The Nimrod stage space appears an exciting challenge to a Designer when seen stripped bare and without any lamps overhanging the stage. To create theatrical illusions at Nimrod is very difficult. The techniques used to great illusionary effect in proscenium theatres usually backfire within the close audience-stage confines of the Nimrod.

Probably the most theatrically contrived and illusionary set has been *Kolpoone* where the deliberate fakery of "the set" was used as a key to the style of the production. On a different level Ian Robinson's set for *Travelling North* cunningly explored subtle architectural illusions through false perspective and raked levels. This worked convincingly by the precision in the final execution of the set.

The most obvious method of illusion at such close audience proximity is by expanding or contracting the space on an horizontal line. *Twelfth Night* achieved extreme panoramic space with its continuous slatted walls of graded cream to green colour bands and minimal construction. Inside *The Island* with its diagonal wheel structure provided a new unexpected juxtaposition of the space relationship. The "Buller's House" landscape and sky embraced the auditorium in a simple illusionary sweep.

The Nimrod workshop has grown in staff and developed in its skills to become very advanced in its use of modern techniques and materials suitable for the unconventional theatre space Nimrod is.

Ultimately I feel that in its short life Nimrod has become more aware of the importance of director/designer relationships and encouraged a more intelligent attitude and appreciation of Design among actors and audiences.



SET DESIGN

ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
 Director
 Richard Wherrett
 Set Designer
 Brian Thomson
 Costume Designer
 Sue Blane

TWELFTH NIGHT
 Director
 John Bell
 Designer
 Kim Carpenter

COMEDY OF ERRORS
 Director
 John Bell
 Set Designer
 Larry Eastwood
 Costume Designer
 Vicki Feitscher



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Photographed by Kim Carpenter. Photograph by John O'Neill.

THEATRE/ACT



SEATS, BOP, MARCH INTO WALLS

Very, very serious theatre

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

By Margaret Wells

Standard Operating Procedure The first of a series of images from the *Background* devised by the Pouch Gallery Theatre Company. Real House Theatre Workshop. Opened 25 September 1992

Director: Carl Woodrow, Design and Lighting: Julie Wood, Production Manager: Susan McDonald, Ad production: Peter Spilchard

Cost: Linda Mayne, Tina Gaffey, Jo Fleming, Inge Keel, Tony MacGregor, Harolda G. Hare, Robal Moron, Audremond

Standard Operating Procedure is very, very serious theatre indeed. So serious in fact that the temptation to discuss the issues instead of the production is almost overwhelming. Black theatre it is, with lightning flashes of colour, but never a flash of humour or optimism. Plays Unpleasant were never as unpleasant as this. Audiences see they are coming away bloodstained, but the action in Canberra has been extended and is playing to full houses. SOP has created a new Canberra phenomenon. Serious theatre with audience appeal.

It details some of the barbarities which in many lands and cultures have been and still are practised on women in the name of history, religion or the rights of men. Footbinding, suttee, the burning of widows, female circumcision, witchburning, rape as a right and rite of war, rape in the street — all of them, pretty *Standard Operating Procedure*, all of them excruciatingly unpleasant, all of them rarely mentioned or even noticeable. "They tell us of Vietnam where rape was pretty standard SOP. Just the ordinary Joe having a good time. When women's bodies were a war reward, a necessary premium like soda pop and ice-cream, to keep the boys healthy and happy."

SOP slides from the pretensions of legend — the story of the concubine of the Chinese emperor Li Yu who danced on a

golden lotus platform, her tiny feet whirling and in whose honour and violation women began to bind their daughter's feet, to the agony of the three-inch foot, of the broken bones, of the cutting flesh and the running pain, back to the harem of Concubine whose ugly sisters stand off their toes and heels to fit into the tiny glass slipper.

Mutilation is seen as a method of control, of asserting the legitimacy of men and the power of men over their property and households. Footbound, handbound, mutilated women. That is the final reality of all barbarities of SOP. Their common effect, intended or otherwise, is to restrict women's lives, within the limits of the permitted, the physically possible or the physically safe. It is not the infliction of pain that is the real injustice. Men too, die horribly in war, are tortured for religion's sake, bear the agony of mutilation or mutilation rites, even live are raped. But the threat of rape keeps women indoors,



Photo: Lisa Cooper and Jo Fleming in *Pouch Gallery's SOP*

determines who they may talk to, and about what, where they may travel, by what means and with whom, what they may wear, how they may sit, what they may think, what they may wish, what they may dream and what they may attempt. In our society it is mainly self-censorship that girls learn, so early, in many others it is an externally imposed censorship — a censorship of all the activities of life — that is the special tragedy of women. Footbound, handbound, mindbound.

As with all of Carol Woodrow's work, the visual and sound images are stunning. The thrust of the knife as it slices Concubine's harem's pumpkin — which bleeds for the ugly sisters' bleeding feet and the bound feet of the women of China, "Stonehearted Men", sung in a plaintive wailer from a theatre blackout, and chafon that drapes the emperor's head, that belows as flames for the burning widow, the beguister, the torturer and the Man, these feet fall, bringing high down the walls, their robes falling to the floor, elongated, distorted and threatening, grotesquely crushed and defiled.

But it is the images of pain that will not go away, the starvation of the unborn widow, cast on the streets, the burning of the woman sitting at the entrance of her Eltern and labor. These images from the *Background* will not be soon forgotten, and with three more plays in the cycle to come, will be a powerful and convincing image in the lives of all who have seen them.

Standard Operating Procedure moves to Sydney in January, and will be there for the Festival of Sydney. Further plays in the series will be *Sleeping Beauty*, examining the myth of romantic love, *Orpheus/Sun* on other myths about women that have made them despised, and *Being about* reflecting the lost dream of hope. The whole series is "an attempt to put power and joy into lives of individuals, to celebrate and then destroy the barriers between men and women, and the world."

Images from the *Background* is the fruit of two years of full time unpaid ensemble work, by a remarkable group led by a remarkable director, one who loves actual new theatre companies behind whatever she goes. There are three theatre companies operating in Canberra, now which were founded by Carol Woodrow, and they produce some of the most interesting and exciting theatre we see. Images from the *Background* led her to being the masterwork of a career, and a major contribution by Pouch Gallery to Australian theatre.

THEATRE/NSW



SEATH REP:
LEAH WARNER.
BOOK: EDITOR

Best theatre in a long time

HAPPY END

By Barry O'Connor

Happy End by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. The Q Theatre, French NSW Opened October 12th 1991. Director: Louise Sharp. Musical Director: Paul Robinson. Stage Manager: Vanessa Collins.

Cast: Billy Fox, Anna Red, Coo. Figure 1: Richard Brooks. Journal: Ben Gabbard, Marnie, Laura. Captain Sam: Kevin Jackson, Harlowe: Wayne Whelan. Keith, Pk: Jane Lyons McKeown, Nasser: Carter Martin. Shannon, The Professor: John Nasser. Marshall: Figure 2: Jack Vassallo. Ben Gabbard: Marnie Vassallo.

(Production)

French can boast the best Brecht I've seen this side of the Iron Curtain. In fact, the Q's production of *Happy End* is perhaps the best theatre I've seen in a long time.

Designer Louise Sharp has opened the Q out to its full width to accommodate the projection screens, catwalk scaffolding, and Spokenby playing space of this Chicago-based Brecht, which brings together the disparate worlds of Shost's *Major Barbara* and the American musical *Gone with the Wind*.

The story is a bit thin, being about the love affair (if you can call it that) of an underworld hoodlum and a Salvation Army Lieutenant. The Lieutenant, of course, is a woman, *Happy End* is a straight play in that sense.

It's also a straight play in that it has a happy ending and a final recognition scene of melodramatic creakiness. Perhaps this is why Brecht wanted to discuss the play. Whatever the reason, the romantic idyll is highly entertaining, especially under the energetic and inventive direction of Doeren Warburton and Kevin Jackson, who keep the action as taut as an upgrum.

And then there's the music!

Happy End is one of the Brecht-Kurt Weill collaborations — another is the better known *Threepenny Opera* — and

the music is magnificent. Much of the credit for this must go to Phil Robertson, the musical director. All the numbers are made memorable, while bettered only "Sundays Johnny" had achieved a celebrity independent of the play.

Brecht doesn't give the actors much to build their characters on, but, then, Doeren Warburton believes that alienation — that "sit up and take notice" Brechtian cliché — comes from the writing not the acting. When the play was first performed in 1929 the world of American gangsterdom was a kind of free-floating historical fact. For today's actor it's almost a process of unlearning from all those Warner Bros Crime Epics, and all those slick musicals.

I don't know what the actors in this present production did, except that their creations, while cartoon-like in posture

and speech, are thoroughly truthful and convincing. Malcolm Keith's "The Governor", a dagger-throwing crook, who substitutes "V" for "r" in the traditional vaudevilian manner, is far all that a fearsome and menacing villain. Mr Keith points a revolver at a member of the audience and utters "SHUT!" we all feel the cold chill of threat run through us.

The ensemble work is textbook — (except I don't think anyone has written a text-book on the subject). The crowd scenes are excellent, both vocally and visually the product of discipline and devotion. The lights are historically realistic; the business, in the songs and elsewhere, compelling and clever.

Among the newcomers to the regular Q-company, Sally McKeown is most welcome both as an actress and a singer.



Ben Gabbard in Q's *Happy End*

Local celebration

THE STAR SHOW

By Katharine Benham

The Star Show by Peter Matheson and John McCullum. Screen by Allen McCadden. Warner Video. Theatre Company. Newcastle. N.S.W. Opened 10th December 1988. Duration: 90 mins. Screened on Channel 3, Barry Manton.

Cost: Myloney Morgan, Frank Corfield, Car Lehmman, David Wood and Allen McCadden. Music by Stephen Ashford, Jonathan Higgins. Night Supervisor and Martin Fox.

Years ago I wrote a review of an end-of-year concert in my daughter's kindergarten — not all that facetiously because watching the total absorption of the audience, I had a sudden insight into the importance of the audience in the creation of a new dramatic work.

The children were, of course, performing just as children do and I doubt the material was original. It was the empathy of the audience, projecting their knowledge of what was behind the getting up of such an altar, which raised it to a unique and splendid occasion.

I was reminded of that audience at the premiere of a very different work. *The Star Show*, at the Civic Playhouse, Newcastle, under the inventive direction of Aaron Norris.

The Star Show by Peter Matheson and John McCullum, with clumping music by Allen McCadden, is a stirring account of the riot last summer, the night the Star Hotel was closed down. The Star is one local denuded it, was Kings Cross in microcosm for the people of Newcastle, with a front bar for sailors and prostitutes, a middle bar for the gays and drag queens, and a back bar for the kids, the unemployed, for anyone who had nowhere to go. The play is set in the back bar where in songs of loneliness interspersed with slides and anecdotes we learn the hotel's 150-year-old history.

Alternating with these vignettes is the comic strip tale of a Chicago hotel which changed hands in a shady deal by a real estate operator with influence in the City Council, and who then found on the police to have it closed. The parallel is there if one wishes to draw it. The show ends with a 20-minute film of footage taken by NBN Channel 3 of customers in violent confrontation with the police, who, on the whole, get the worst of it.

As a show it is highly entertaining, punctuated by an admirably hard-working cast of five playing some 15 characters and



Car Lehmman and Frank Corfield in *THE STAR SHOW*.

supported by the impressive quartet, the Musical Plug. I particularly liked The Biker Song, sung by David Wood and Rising, touchingly sung by Myloney Morgan.

Such occasions are a celebration, of a sense of community of shared experience and memory. Such is one of the finest qualities of the theatre, giving it a local habitation and a name. But *The Star Show* understandably attempts to analyse as well as to commemorate the hotel incident, and to lay blame where it is due on a social occasion is not easy or well mannered. As documentary the show qualifies tentatively on a lot of sensitive areas, laying most emphasis on the view that the Star was a place where young people could 'be themselves'. But seeing on film a crowd

being themselves with rocks and other missiles, spending and burning police vehicles, was at odds with the pastoral idea of the young as 'today's Aborigines'. The theme behind the theme was Newcastle's long-standing suspicion of the police — and that is the real history of the Star Hotel riot.

Nevertheless the fact as it stands brings a joy of recognition to its Newcastle audience which no outside concert stage. And that is what the embattled Warner Video Theatre Company needs just now, a recognition of community possession. It may find a wider audience if it can grow and define its message of what the Star Hotel stood for in a working man's town. But for the moment that is not all that important.



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Part play, part homage

SONGS FROM SIDESHOW ALLEY

by Michele Field

Songs from Sideshow Alley Paris Theatre, Sydney
Presented by Circuit Company from Ipswich/October 16, 1990

Director: Rodney Hudson; Designer: Ian Robinson;
Stage Manager: Geoff Ramsey; Lighting: Peter
Holliman; Musician: Andrew de Tilly; John
Sommers and Peter Deane-Burton

Cast: Tanya Mearns Hayes, Pearl Maggie
Kirkpatrick
(Photograph)

The borderland between Memory Lane and homage is a mine. *Sideshow Alley* dived through this middleground, I thought, while trying to decide where to go. The second half of the show is definitely a homage: a tribute very well paid to the panache of sideshow entertainers. The whip-cracking performance left me wishing that "showmanship" was all that the evening was supposed to be about, that I could forget the two tough-but-

pathetic ladies whose life-moments were the substance of the first act.

Sideshow Alley is a two-person cabaret in the American theatre tradition (without elaborating, I'd like to insist that there is a club cabaret tradition and a theatre-cabaret tradition in the United States) and Robyn Archer's script for *Sideshow Alley* has exactly caught the nuances of the latter. Its only less-than-perfect feature is the occasional banality of the gaps between the songs. Pearl and Tanya are two aging tycoons — ex-dykes — of the sideshow circuit, and the first act tries to demonstrate the solidarity that exists between them although their common bond, the business, is wearing thin.

The economic straits of the sideshow-business itself, however, are very much underplayed. What we are shown is the impact of a dying business on the personal relationships involved. To my mind, this is a very an-Hechtian emphasis that Robyn Archer didn't need. *Sideshow Alley* without the caustic economic criticism sounds too much like *Carousel*.

All of the rest of the show's fault is can be laid either at the feet of the Paris Theatre's architects (the theatre design forces cabaret to be played like British musicals) or at the mickeying Nancy Hayes and Maggie Kirkpatrick, are on the filly-

year-olds that the script suggests. It was a lost opportunity. These roles should have been given to the oldest and grittiest actresses capable of handling them. It might have been a start in Australian theatre of the sassy, snappy old women in comedies — not even Bessie-Lille or Margaret Rutherford. Instead, as a pointer out in this production, Nancy Hayes has been pushed too far towards the pluck and swagger of the young Ethel Merman in *Drone-Left Four Days*.

The rapport between the three main characters at times overshadows what is supposed to be the solidarity between Pearl and Tanya. Andrew de Tilly, John Sommers, and Peter Deane-Burton took to the stage for one song which stole the show on opening night — probably because it was so delightfully staged with none of the hiccupping-beating tones that coloured the women's numbers. The three young men could play at being cute and were charming, however, when Hayes and Kirkpatrick played at being cute, they quickly propagated the rule of themselves as tough speakers. The only way to have prevented the boys from upstaging Tanya and Pearl would have been to cast them also as sideshow-alley characters, putting the throw-away act on par with the throw-a-ball congection.



Tanya Mearns and Maggie Kirkpatrick in *Sideshow Alley*

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Direction: Nick Darlight and Michael
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THEATRE/OLD



STREET MAP
1985 BALTIMORE

Refined tragi-comedy

A HANDFUL OF FRIENDS

by Veronica Kelly

A Handful of Friends by David Williamson. La Brea Theatre Festival. Closed 24 October 1985.
Director: Jennifer Brockedge. Script Consultant: Brian Wright. Designer: Jonathan Edwards. Lightings: Elizabeth Davis. Stage Manager: Brian Wright.
Cast: Russell McCutcheon, Bruce Park, David McClellan, Diana Glen, Jill Ferry, Melinda Black, Marshall, Alan Rothman, Jeff Marshall, Ray Perry (offstage).

Traveling North seen here recently, gave me the warmest feeling about Williamson's work. He has been able to evolve since *The Departures* and, before that, *The Remains*. It seems to mark a stylistic break brought in the handling of his themes of human relationships, allowing, briefly, to a shift from naturalism to realism. From the bath of realism a dramatist is secure to move towards nuanced areas, symbolism, farce, parable, or, as in *Traveling North* an elegant species of comedy. Naturalism however is a dead-end style. The relationships between characters are given and from them on the only possible dramatic development is backwards and downwards, backwards two more or less continued narratives of the relevant past and downwards into yet more scrutinized examination of motives and ambiguities. The crises are static, revealing only the patterns of the past and although the confrontations are avoided to be therapeutic for the characters for the audience they only give what is already evident.

Which brings me to *A Handful of Friends*. I can't pretend to like the play, and this is why. Insights, irony, jokes, compassion, concern for moral structure—all the strengths for which one values Williamson, are trapped in the stylistic prison, unable to stretch, explore or develop. Round and round they pedal in a

circle, appearing ever smaller and smaller when they should be getting larger, expanding, imposing their authority. This is a pity, as the dramatist's perception of our society is too valuable to be neutralized in this way. La Brea's production of *Handful*, which concentrating in this spectacle the old ambivalence intrinsic in this phase of Williamson's work, provides the chance to revise acquaintance with a not-quite Thompsonian gallery drawn from the artist and academic middle class flamed to level and obscure prominence on the crest of the Whittier new wave. As Sally's nightmare perhaps explains, they resemble the inhabitants of a house high on a cliff with a "beautiful aspect", but the cliff is being undermined and they are edging ever closer to doom. Ambition and vitality cut with profound insecurity and self-destruction are validly observed products of a society that exalts and destroys with apparent exuberance, apparent if the social perspective that causes psychological patterns is removed from view as in the case here. How easily comprehensible though, with motives and aggressions all trapped in the same futility



Peter McCutcheon and Jill Ferry in La Brea's *Handful of Friends*.

nightmare. As the group's climax (and compromise) to deal out blame on the banks, how true that each is subsequently expecting to be dealt out by their closest intimates. Jill's betrayal of Sally, although the apex of the violence, is a gesture aimed refreshing in its boldness. Mark and Sally are clearly wounded because they have united to protect each other's backs, sublimately seeking betrayal of their friends and known as fuel for the running of their own defensive-offensive partnership.

The production does not let the characters rant or display uncontrolled Jonsonian buffoonery. From Jennifer Brockedge's remarks about maintaining balance between comedy and seriousness, this is a deliberate decision seeking to impose total unity on the play's shifty naturalism. Francine Ormrod's elegant set provides an initial image of the balance: a beautiful and apt piece of design. The overall tone is even, the downward depths are explored and pain registered, but it is not big or full-blooded. The production is dead as though the script were a refined trap-comedy, and although in *Handful* I don't think Williamson was moving into that area, it is no disgrace to treat the play as if it were.

Of the two couples the McCutcheon marriage is the more satisfying. Bruce Park's academic yet naive carefully manipulated his close persons to avoid confrontations, and Diana Glen's Wendy portrays the gentleness which corrupts the two men, and also the underlying gut which makes her walk out on another botched compromise. Peter McCutcheon, ill as a tough and basically moral being self-betrayed as much by a genuine capacity for love of his brother and of Sally, as by his wife. The Marshall duo are however given a beautifully low-key reading and this evokes colour and gusto from the production. The play has suddenly seems to demand big, outrageous, personalities, likable, lyrical, self-dramatising compounds of scared nihilism and animal life-force. Their attractiveness becomes that of a glimmer couple, not of embodiments of the unstoppable Will to Power that so inevitably bedevils their friends. They do not emerge as enough of a handful to warrant the devastation they cause. Whereas the production aims at homogeneity of tone, *Handful* is perhaps still leaning back towards *Don't Push* where grotesque humour attempts to cut loose on a stylized Jonsonian rampage, only to be deflected by naturalistic confinements. It is a national work.

THEATRE/SA

Brilliant

SMOKING IS BAD FOR YOU SCANLAN

by Michael Morley

Smoking Is Bad For You by Aron Glickler and
Scanned by Barry Glickler, Mario Theatre Company at
Chicago, 60. Adolph, United Artists, 1998.
Director: Neil Armstrong. Opening: Nigel Laverie. Stage
Manager: John Kelly.
The Actor: Max Glickler.
(Photo: courtesy)

What is there to say of Max Glickler? Those who know his past work seemed comparatively unsurprised at his performances in the Chekhov and Oakley monologues. But one of the occasional rewards of being a critic is in finding word of mouth confirmed and watching a performer demonstrate the aptness of his or her high reputation. In these two monologues Glickler was the living demonstration of Shakespeare's "he hath indeed better belched expectations than you must expect of me to tell you about."

Of course one can point to Glickler's precision, his timing, his energy, his ability to suggest with a twitch of the trousers or a shrug of the shoulder a lifetime of awkwardness or emotions thwarted. Some have suggested that the disengaged academic of the Chekhov monologue and the obscure and mean Scanlan are too alike; the basic situations of the plays too similar to allow for variety. This is simply not true. Of course Oakley's piece originated as it was by the Chekhov—employs similar conventions, but it cries out to be set beside the Chekhov so that the differences and contrasts can emerge.

That they did is due primarily of course to Glickler's brilliance but also to Neil Armstrong's direction. This is the second of his productions (the first *Island* was the other) I have seen and on this evidence he is possibly the most talented of the younger directors. He has what may sound a self-evident requirement for any director—a sure feel for dramatic structure, for the highs and lows of a piece, for shifts in mood and momentum. In this connection, the understated tone of the Chekhov monologue was probably his and Glickler's happiest touch. Chekhov's aging, hen-pecked and repressed farm manager as a figure both of fun and pathos—an obvious enough combination but difficult to realize when his catalogue of woes is delivered in a fairly level voice with few

explanations. But with such an approach the odd moments of energy or surprise have the force of a candle pin in the audience's face, the clenched fist deliberately lowered rather than slammed on the table to emphasize a point. The audience poring into the wings at the thought that his domestic culture might be warring her way over the horizon towards him.

Oakley's Scanlan is a figure of more extreme savings of emotion, of more overtly deployed obsessions, the more obvious of these being his conviction that the master talent Henry Kendall is really a major one is yet unrecognized. Oddly enough, at a recent viewing (typically arranged in a University lecture theatre) critics' renditions of Kendall's verses were so effective that many of the audience felt there was indeed a case for a re-appraisal of the poet. And this is one of the major strengths of Oakley's play instead of selling up Scanlan simply to ridicule, he uses him to assume the typical lecturer's ticks and quacks, while at the same time

giving him some of the mythic oratorical dignity that Max Bornheim bestowed on his obscure second-hand academic and scholar, Enock Scamius.

There are moments when Oakley's script wavers awkwardly between bathos and pathos (most obviously at the end, when the introduction of details like Scanlan's past love affair jumps from the comically staid to the awkwardly sentimental). But these are minor quibbles, when one considers how the author has managed to compress into barely 50 minutes both the portrait of a failure and a more small-scale failure, who still refuse to be down. Scanlan's domestic troubles, his battles to convince himself, his audience and his academic colleagues of Kendall's importance, his quixotic, manic willingness to take things personally, all these are beautifully caught in Glickler's performance. It is comic acting of the highest order, in which the performer catches precisely that combination of thing and person that is the root of the comic.



After Glickler as Scanlan

Important things to say

RENT

By Noel Furdan

As in: Martin Sherman, Book Theatre Company, Playhouse Theatre 5 & Opened Theatre Park, 1988
Director: John Towner, **Designs:** Richard Roberts, **Lighting Designer:** Nigel Levinge
Cast: John Hargreaves, Rudy, Michael Goss, Will, Roland Neumann, SS Captain Garry, Simon Bartlett-Holmes, SS Officer James Lacey, Gertie, Wayne Jarvis, Freddie John Edmund, Hans Tom, Countess SS Captain Peter Schwarz, Prisoner Raymond Arjona, Russell Maypole
(Reviewed)

Martin Sherman's *Rent* is a powerful, political emotionally devastating play about the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazis. Its most harrowing scene is the rock-crawling verbal love-making which occurs between the two gay prisoners Max who has had intercourse with a dead woman to prove he is "straight" and therefore earn the higher badge of "Jew", and the unnamed passionate Hans. It moves more than an historical document. It reaches delibeately at the consciousness of the modern audience to point out that homosexuals are still oppressed in exactly the same way, by people who would never actually connect themselves with Nazi ideology. Homosexuals will continue duly to move society's mental rocks meaningfully from one side of the mental stage to the other.

John Towner's production is technically excellent. His sense of staging is impeccable. Richard Roberts, who designed the sets, and Nigel Levinge, who delighiting, have done everything required of them, and more. There have even been somewhat nervous public forums after the performances, courageously chaired by John Lacey, and variously responded to by the cast, the director and vocal members of the audience. People who have seen the Melbourne production are unanimous that the Adelaide one is better in every way.

So what's wrong with it? Firstly, the director, for all his stage smarts, clearly doesn't have a political bone in his body. He encourages important historical material not glossed over or played for laughs. He is not an intelligent director. Secondly, John Hargreaves, about whom everyone expressed rapturous gratitude for taking the main part of Max (after apparent simplifying doubts in Melbourne) simply cannot sustain or convince. Agency becomes petulance, anger spats, confusion, sheer dishonesty. Though he may well be

capable of it, he does not give an intelligent performance.

The acting honours go to Tom Countess in a solidly felt, clearly expressed unfolding of the character of Hans. Also acutely observed by the First Line mobile are

lightened to be bold about its recent selection and status of plays, it should take heart. There is no need to present a repenting, apologetic face to its public, as if it had important, necessary things to say, but is fearful of conservative reaction.



Ben Photo David Wilson

the various careers of the Berlin gay scene given by Michael Goss, Wayne Jarvis and John Edmund. The S.E.C. in its present constitution deserves great praise for its strong company, and its strong selection of political and sexual material. If it appears

It had better take a leaf out of Sherman's manuscript. The history of concealment, shame, confusion and compromise is well documented in *Rent*. Unless changed radically, made public and supported by a mass of people it ends in Dachau.

THEATRE/VIC



STAGE REP
DIANNE
SPENCER

Moving and compassionate

THE ELEPHANT MAN

by Colin Darkworth

*Dr. P. G. James M.D. in Bernard Pomerance, M.D. David
Hewson Company, Royal Albert Theatre, Melbourne,
A.C. (Opened 8 December, 1980)
Director: Ted Elmgren; Designer: James Henderson
Lighting Designer: Jamie Ryan,
4 and 5 Lyndrick Drive, Rosalind Falls; John Merrick
Baker was Marichelsberg; Mrs. Kendal Sheridan
Barker with Patrick Hoggan, Douglas Hodge, Robert
Honey, Robin McWilliam, Louise Dutton C. and Anna
Dutton*

(Photo courtesy)

This play for at least this production of it contains one of the most moving and compassionate scenes I have ever witnessed in the theatre. After that one 'business' pulses into unsustained truisms, but as my reaction was not shared for example by a sensitive and intelligent colleague who sat tomorrow on the row in front it might be worth while trying to explain this different response to the last meeting between beasts and the beast: Mrs Kendal and John Merrick.

For one thing, my colleague knew quite a bit about the monstrous freak, Merrick, and I did not. So the confrontation between the young woman, who had been selected for the job because as an actress she would be able to hide her feelings of disgust and the victim of neuro-fibromatosis, with his lapidated disfiguring hole for a mouth, soft, spongy cauliflowerlike growths all over his head and body, and elephantine arms and leg, was an occasion that not even years of careful viewing of Dr. Baer's memoirs had prepared me for. My sensibilities were still open to attack by the fragile attempts of these two ill-matched people to begin their pathetic and painful struggle towards impossible love. So if you want to maintain your innocence, too far away this scene and after you have seen the play. You may react differently, for example, when you know, and have seen

found out, that Merrick never in fact, met Mrs Kendal. So full marks to Bernard Pomerance, and now to Sheridan Baker, who has done the play as a more series of sketchy, little documentary scenes, "giving us facts and very little else".

In 1880 John Merrick was rescued from

the degradation of being a fatground freak by Frederick Treves, Surgeon-Extraordinary, to Queen Victoria, who lodged him comfortably at the London Hospital until he died, still a young man, four years later. Within months of his rescue, Merrick became transformed from



Douglas Hodge (Dr. P.G. James) and Robert (John Merrick) during the scene of the Elephant Man

a striking contrast to a celebrity receiving small talks from fashionable society, even from Alexandra, Princess of Wales, who paid him many visits.

The reason for his popularity is not merely explained since he remained as grotesquely brutal as ever: "he wore shorn photographs of him to begin with, which bear and Travers' make description of him. From the brow, a huge brow, more like a lead from the back of the head being a bag of springy fungus-looking skin. A mass of hair protruded from the mouth like a pork snout. Huge sacklike masses of flesh hung from the back. "and so on. Yet the ugliest man in the world was found to have among the most beautiful by his charm, intelligence and sensibility.

The squanderer is let off lightly, once realising the authors' instructions that *Unguy* made no attempt to read nature in his position. Herbert von Mackendorff portrayed him, first as his handsome young self, then slowly becoming him, crippled, lightened. I do hope he has a good physiotherapist, for sheer distortion in his art he deserves the best, since by these simple means he managed to suggest something of the horror, not so much by his appearance as by his appreciation of how others must have been accepting him (until he was accepted). Alas, though, this was a merely subtle underpinning rendering, avoiding any trace of melodrama.

The last scene in Act I with Midge Kendall (a host of loveliness and tenderness was, much drawn by Gerakinos, Turner) was balanced in the second half by the compositious scene in which the suicidal heart, responds to the suicidal renals of Merrick to the extent of burning her breasts for him, with to be caught in Rignart delight as Bernard Miles would say, in the outraged lover, and homicide.

Bernald Falko goes as a Thers, compatible to the doctor as James Holmes, concerned and led to self-questioning in his patient's condition. Indeed, in the through Travers that the play is given a purpose that transcends the genuine sincerity, underlying the interest aroused by the Merrick case, once he leads the way to a violent church, as an act of the high society, victims of Merrick as a mirror of themselves. This is one main function of the other characters in the play, the others being to give Myrick opportunities to show his wit, gentle humour, common sense and candid innocence, and to provide a background of social values. He who is really a general medical problem: how and why do we react to the character who is no matter what physical or mental oddity, is *Not One of Us*. He could be a Savage, a Vermin, or a talking llama: he happens to have been called Merrick.

The psychic world of the actor

A MAN OF MANY PARTS

by Cathy Peake

of *Man of Many Parts* by Jack Hibbard. Third Second Theatre, Melbourne. Dipped October 29 1988
Director: Rick Bellingham
Book: Hope, Frederick Parlow

Jack Hibbard's *Man of Many Parts* is self-consciously situated in that uneasy, shifting psychic world that lies between an actor and his roles. It is an intimate and exhausting play, full of theatrical anecdotes and one which presents its subject both as a sort of moving, three-dimensional in space crossword, and as one of the anecdotes.

In general, Noah Hope (played actor and B. Peck) (Spitz) behaves like a fly-



Jack Hibbard in *A Man of Many Parts*.

wheel that has lost its governor and which fluctuates between quiescence and runaway energy. His pose is like a city under mechanical exploration waiting to be translated, restructured or simply read. Especially the latter.

Noah often conducts his search for a "self" from a large chair with its back to the audience. And the implication that he is parading aspects of a full-blown psychosis for the impersonal probing and inspection of an audience psychiatrist is pronounced and intriguing.

From time to time it is also hard to take. For the drama of the piece tends to be narrowly confined to Noah's tendency to swing without notice from wild mania to black depression and the quest for the

play seems tucked away in the chaotic backcountry of a brain where various dislocations of meaning, time, place and space occupy up images of a very limited malfunctioning cerebral cortex indeed.

But that is probably to take Hibbard's own metaphor for the play as 'a theatrical slice of the brain' too seriously. "Somewhere inside all this craziness, comedy, despair and music there is the feeling that Noah did once feel 'authentic' though probably despise himself and certainly a long time ago.

Now he is a lateral thinker of the most outrageous kind and his oblique flights of ideas, which include conversations with some of the great intellectual figures of the century, make enormous demands on the concentration of his audience.

They also presuppose a sophisticated literary background. Hibbard's writing is full of puns and is frankly ironic. Impetuous jokes of the kind James Joyce and Nabokov make. They don't always translate well on stage. He has chosen to represent his characters at a time when it is no longer possible for him to look back or reflect without gross falsification and exaggeration.

And like the best outsider he is Noah's real and most pressing problem is how to go forward. In many ways it is as though he wants his life and his stage to be in the state of eye and action but, instead, finds himself struck with every other sort of reaction, subordinate clauses when what he really needs is a sense of location and a transitive verb.

Noah's wit is fascinating, acerbic and often self-deprecating and most of his energy is given over to his need for boundaries for himself and his world — a need for the 'edge' of things. But he is also a him actor and in Frederick Parlow's hands he becomes an actor playing a him actor — a nation's sight and a curious sound, particularly the latter for the sound shuffles back and forth between intimate modes barely audible in the centre of the auditorium and raucous shouting, not to mention the odd look-alike, a gunshot and panga from time.

With only a crumy matelotism, a backdrop in a wash house and a drunk of gormy old stage props to play with, Parlow's performance in his first one-man show is strenuous though not entirely successful. Both he and director Rick Bellingham seem to have had trouble finding a line for the play and have settled for a sort of cat-and-mouse game with the audience and a hot and mass approach to its humour.

When this approach works, Noah emerges with a harsh, morose and poignancy, when it doesn't the play falls with a thump into the grunting and incomprehensible world of noise.



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THEATRE/WA



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What went wrong?

THE SAME SQUARE OF DIRT

By Margaret Luke

The Same Square of Dirt by Mary Gage. The National Theatre Company of The Playhouse, Perth. Opened 17 October 1986.

Director: Stephen Barry; Designer: Tony Tropp; Lighting: Dennis Bell; Stage Manager: Leanne Smith; Cost. Pm: Rosemary Barr; Writer: Ivan King; Performers: Lu Horne, Keith Anderson, Alan Cassell, Nicky Paul Mann.

A sad moment in the annals of the Perth Playhouse. Perth writer Mary Gage's subtle and imaginative play about Charles

Kingford Smith closed after only one week.

It should not have happened. Energetic, though probably misguidedly advised publicity, wide media coverage, an attractive production with a predominantly good cast. What went wrong?

Throughout there was a basic mis-understanding about the kind of play it is. *The Same Square of Dirt*, even though employing the same historical setting as other recent Australian biographical plays, is less free-wheeling, less aggressive — in fact more fragile than its peers.

Advisory publicity was not doing it a favour by claiming that "perhaps more so than Brecht's *Moritz*, Mary Gage's script could well become the basis of a truly great motion picture." To the interested audience or critic this suggested a hard-hitting, gutsy play, which might avoid the current misadventures heavyweights. In fact, the play is a delicate, often funny, always perceptive study of relationships and attitudes. The critic of the influential *West Australian* weighed in with a review that managed to

miss the point altogether — *blasted* the excellent lead, Paul Mann, for playing the character of Kingford Smith as a flawless opportunist (which was precisely what the author had clearly intended), instead of the cliché the critic had expected "to be mould from which popular heroes are made." The review was headlined "Smithy given a pale image" — enough to put sweeping patrons off entirely.

The portrait of "Smithy" as a personable and irresponsible liar is, in fact, rehearsing and honest. The play introduced us to him with humour and style — in a pub, having stood up a dating girl-friend (later his wife) because he was busy working on a deal to finance his obsession with record-breaking flights. At breakfast speed we are taken through courtship, marriage (Australian-style, with the "made" proving more important than the wife), the flying triumphs, the divorce, the broken friendship and bitter legal wrangles — to the final drama. Smithy lost, and the estranged man searching his own life looking for the lost place.

The episodic treatment was echoed beautifully by Tony Tropp's decorative red-on red-on red miniature sets, whilst the silver leaves-figure suspended over the empty stage made its symbolic point gracefully.

Interspersed with the personal confrontations that made up the "private life" of the hero, screened momentary footage of the public events was used effectively to extend the scope of the play.

Lively support for Paul Mann's taxi and merry Smithy were Rosemary Barr as a ramshackle barmaid with a heart of gold and Ivan King as The Captain, an archetypal Aussie with a streak of boozing pessimistic humour. Alan Cassell as the stoical and disillusioned man Andy was most impressive — especially in the scene where the pleading, normally good-guy breaks out into anger and self-mockery. Lu Horne was perhaps too much the child-bride, starting wide-eyed and flappish, and growing into waspish petulance.

The lesson to be learnt from the failure of this venture is probably that subtlety will only be tolerated if it is wrapped up in pretentious "arty" treatments (which this play wasn't), and that episodic biography is only acceptable if it is presented in the now standard grotesque comic-strip format, preferably with offbeat or lifeless potential to give it sensation value. *The Same Square of Dirt* is an understated play, which might have done better in a smaller theatre, aimed at a more academically defined audience.



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VIVALDI AND OTHER ITALIANS

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ACT THEATRE

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7660)

Clifford Hocking Enterprises presents
Pam Ayres Dec 8

A Christmas Carol with Dennis Olsen
Presented by the Canberra Theatre Trust
in association with CTC Channel 7 Jan 9-24

PLAYHOUSE (49 6488)

Radiolosophy Productions and Canberra
Theatre Trust present

Just As I Was a children's musical Dec
16-20 Summer Arts Festival Repertory
Cinema Presented by Electric Shadows
Jan 2-11

REID HOUSE THEATRE

WORKSHOP (476 781)

Foehn Gallery *Sleeping Beauty* director,
Carol Woodrow. Second play in the cycle
Strangers From The Background devised by
the Company To Dec 7

THEATRE 3 (474 222)

Canberra Repertory Society *Arms And
Old Lace* by Joseph Kesselring, director,
Paul Rosenburg To Dec 20
Opening On Broadway written and
directed by Trevor Findlay director,
Lorraine Emmons producer, Mark
Emmons Jan 26-Feb 7

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7660)

Canberra Opera Society *The Glass
Boon* by Johann Strauss, conductor,
Warren Robinson, producer, John
Miles, designer Graham Melton Dec
17, 19, 20

For more contact Margaret Hefson
43 1057

NSW THEATRE

AXIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

(849 8262)

Roadside Inn, Pacific Highway, Crows
Nest *The Ruler Man/The People Show* by
Tony Harvey and Malcolm Francis
directed by Peter Meredith, chore by Gary
Smith with Greg Bogger, Amanda

George, Chrissie Beggs, Steven Sacks,
Tony Harvey Into Jan
BONDI PAVILION THEATRE
(39 7211)

*Picasso on Stage - The Four Little Girls
and Gervase Gough in the Fall* by Pablo
Picasso Jan 9-17

THE DARLINGHURST PLAYERS

(Albert Ross Reserve, Palmer St
Darlinghurst)

Boys In Know in Sir Henry Parkes An
original Australian Drama set during
Federation Throughout Jan
EAST SYDNEY TECHNICAL
COLLEGE (357 1200)

(Diploma courtyard)

The Liberation of Slagter presented by the
Zagreb Theatre Company Jan 12-24

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (332 8877)

Golden Pavilion Through Glass by
Rodney Milgum directed by Brian Young
with Roger Carroll, Kate Edwards, Judy
Eaton, Frank Haines Hal Jones, Jenny
Ludlam and Alex Pender Until Jan 2

Derby by Howard Breiden *Kiss
Cameback*, Trevor Griffiths and David
Hogg Directed by Brian Young
Commences Jan 2

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL 'N' BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (338 1988)

The Good Old Bad Old Days a musical
review from the annals of the century in
today with Noel Murphy Barbara
Wynton, Garth Moody, Neil Bryant and
Helen Loran, directed by George Carlin
Throughout Dec and Jan

FOOLS GALLERY THEATRE

COMPANY (264 933)

Cleveland St Performing Space, 199
Cleveland St

Standard Operating Procedure
Commences Jan 2

GEMINI THEATRE (335 5648)

Arms and Old Lace by Joseph
Kesselring directed by Paula Bird with
May Place, Kath Snow, Megan Lawson,
Dennis Allen and Timothy Bennett Until
Dec 22

*An Evening with Sam O'Casey End of
the Beginning* directed by Barry Hayes,
Audrey Stone directed by Pamela
Walker and *Half of Working* directed by
Margaret Rennie Commences Jan 3

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY

(31 3817)

The Sables Theatre

*Love and The Simple Tensiper and Bill
Patterson* will be presented by Grant
Fraser Commences Jan 8

The Incredible Family by Dennis
Conroy (a children's production) Commences
Jan 5

Late Night Show Twilight Zone by
Stephen Holt Commences Jan 8

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)

The Best Little Whore House in Texas by
Larry King and Peter Masterson, directed
by Jerry Forder with Lorraine Bayle,
Alfred Sander and Mona Richardson

Until Jan 18
HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE
COMPANY
(38 2524)

Parade Kristiansen, *Four Girls* Gilly Rays
with Alan McFadden, Nicki Walker and
David Wood Tues Wed Thurs, Nov 25
Dec 18

THE KING O'MALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (31 3817)

The Sables Theatre

A Very Good Year by Bob Ellis, directed
by Mack Rodger, with music by Patrick
Flynn Dec 3-14,
KIRKILL-PUR THEATRE
(52 1415)

Rainbow Hotel, Mischief's Power
The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quenton
and Paul Chubb, directed by Perry
Quenton with Louisa Smith Michael
Peigson and Ross Haines Until
Christmas

LIVING FLAME LUNCHEON THEATRE (347 1200)

Remember Jackie by N F Sampson,
directed by Peter Whitford, with Joan
Bray, Elaine Lee and Russell Newman
Until Dec 5

MARIAN STREET THEATRE

(488 3164)

Ami Me Aye by Colin Porter, directed by
Alvinia Duncan, with Ron Stevens, Patsy
Henneghy and Karen Johnson Until
Dec 20 Children's production during first
two weeks of Jan

MIMIC LOFT THEATRE (974 6583)

My the Look, a musical revue with
The Toppans family and Lorraine O'Connell
Until Jan 26

NEW THEATRE (319 3482)

We Still Call Home Annabelle by Fennan
Kuby and Peter Stephens, directed by Ian
Tucker musical direction by John Short
Throughout December

Colonial Experience by Walter Cooper,
directed by Frank McNamara
Commences in New Year

NIMROD THEATRE (499 2803)

Upstairs Collored memories by David
Williamson directed by John Bell with
Kae Fitzpatrick Robin Ramsey Kevin
Smith, Barbara Stephens, Peter Sumner,
Helen Samps and Alan Wilson Dec 3-
Jan 11

The Choir by Erol Bray, directed by Neil
Arnfield Commences Jan 21

Downstairs A Little Dip by Tony
Sheldon and Tony Taylor, with Tony
Sheldon, Tony Taylor, Debra Robinson
and Robyn Mousc Until Dec 21

Judgeless by Barry Collins, directed by
Bill Ghan, with Malcolm Robertson
Commences Jan 7

*Late Night Show The Moonlight and
Serious Show* with Cathy Dorman and
Jenny Ludlam Dec 3-27

Confronting Poor 88 with Beverly
Blanchard Jan 9-31

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF

(031) 12041

The "Sabb" Journey for primary schools and *The Unborn World of Jasper Lemons* for secondary schools, both directed by Ian Watson, with Nola Coleman. David London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Lester. Metropolitan area until Dec 14.

FARE ROYAL CANBERRA

David Bates and Jo Woodward present *Rock's Pure* by David Williamson. Thurs and Fridays (Jan 7-Mon 14-Jan 30). **PIGIRIM THEATRE** 264 Pitt St. *Female Damage* Melbourne Jan 10-23. **RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY** (069) 253552.

Such Is Life by Peter Barclay and Ken Molloy. Until December 13.

THE ROCKS PLAYERS (069) 35011

Car Macart & Kenneth Sits. *Leithhardt: The Musicians on The Dream of Joseph Kuch* by Harry Hayes, directed by Harry Hayes. Until end Jan.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (062) 05351

York Theatre. *I Colours* from with Mara Gidnap. Jan 19-31.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (385) 3440

Five drama workshops throughout school holidays. Youth Theatre Showcase. *Ones by Ones*, directed by Errol Bray. Dec 5, 6, 12 and 13.

Cell Black Theatre Chelmsford and The Tale Play created by the cast and directed by Errol Bray. Dec 5-16.

ST JAMES PLAYHOUSE

Festival of Spoken Playwrights: *Goodbye* by Patricia Johnson. Dec 16-Jan 4. *When in Rome* by Sandra Bates. Jan 6-11.

Manner by Justin Fleming. Jan 13-18. *The Conventman and Five Minutes Mr Adams* by Philip Ryall. Jan 20-25.

SYDNEY CORPOREAL MIMF THEATRE

267 Elizabeth St.

Mime Spectacles. Jan 5-10.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

1205885

Drama Theatre SOH

The Previous. Human by Louis Nowra, directed by Richard Wherrett, with Robyn Nixon, Naomi Hardiburnt, Kevin Miles, Brandon Burke, James Finn, Vic Rooney, Craig Ashley, Robin Browning, Neil Manning, Gillian Jones, Norman Kaye, Andrea Tighe, Alan Tobin and Bill McChesney. Until Dec 28.

Bonus and *The Best* adapted by Louis Nowra from Cidocles, directed by Ben Crumpson, with Michelle Eardon and Brandon Burke. Dec 26-Jan 24.

THEATRE ROYAL (231) 61111

This is Moving Our Song by Neil Simon, directed by Phil Cusack, with Jackie Weaver and John Waters. Until Dec 20. *Celluloid Heroes* by David Williamson. Commences Jan 12.

WAYSIDE CHAPEL THEATRE,

Hughes St., Kings Cross

Who Stole Mr. Clark. Commences Jan 2

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

(031) 12041

Opera House

The Three Madwomen, choreographed by Andrew Prokoryev to music by Verdi. Until Dec 23.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (062) 05351

External Theatre. Jan 12-Feb 8. *Downstairs: Festival of Dance* with One Extra Dance Group. Dance Exchange. Adelaide Dance Group, Queensland Contemporary Dance Theatre Impulse Dance Theatre of New Zealand, Australian Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Human Vents. Jan 2-13.

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA

(20885)

Opera Theatre and Concert Hall. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Benjamin Britten, conducted by William Rees, produced by Elijah Moshinsky. Commences Jan 5.

Don Giovanni by Mozart, produced by George Ogilvie. Commences Jan 8.

The Rape of Lucrece by Benjamin Britten, conducted by David Kraus, produced by Molloy Greenbush. Commences Jan 21. *Orfeo* by Verdi, conducted by Carlo Felice Cilliani, produced by George Ogilvie. Commences Jan 28.

For further contact: *Carole Long* on 909.1070, 137.1299.

QLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36) 2140

Treasure Island by Bernard Miles and Josephine Wilson, directed Jay McKen, music: Hal Shaffer and Cyril Gussard. To Dec 28.

Lady Audley's Secret by C.H. Hazlewood, director, Eric Hauff. To Jan 21.

HER MAJESTY'S (231) 3373

Extended season of *Mr. Fox* Lash, presented by Wilson Morley, with Stuart

Wagstaff

LA BOITE THEATRE (74) 16321

Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Road, *For Sam* by Rob George. To Dec 28. *Shed, Waste and Road* by Simon Denver and Ian Desmet. Jan 1-17.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

COMPANY (221) 9177

SGRD: Crushed & Deere by Michael Boddy, director, John Wilson, designer, Graeme Mackinnon, music, Peter Casey. To Dec 6.

For further contact: *Don Bacheler* on 316.9171

SA THEATRE

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL CENTRE

TRUST

4 Chorus Line by Martin Harbeck. Jan 4-Feb 14. *The Playhouse: Hubert Copps* by Allen Bennett, with Ernie Thornton. Jan 3-Feb 7.

ADELAIDE THEATRE GROUP

Sheddan Theatre, 30 MacKinnon Parade. *Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, with additions by Doug Leonard. To Dec 19.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY

THEATRE (262) 5988

Administrators on service training weekend, Jan 26-31. Feb 1.

SACW CAT TEAM

On tour to Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Jan 15-29.

SPACE THEATRE (51) 91211

Festival Centre Stage Company in *Tales of Fables* by Lancelot Wilson, director, John Noble. To Dec 13.

Stage Company and Pantomime presents *Aus. Mr Goodbody's Sergeant Major* by Bryan Williams and Barbara Ramsay, director Brian Debraun. From Jan 21.

THEATRE GUILD (278) 1574

Acting Company. *Sir Gawan And The Green Knight* written and directed by Chris Tupac. To Dec 19. *Schools Year and at the Scott Theatre* Jan 12-24.

DANCE

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE

Bakery Theatre. 128 Gough St. New choreographer's season. Dec 4, 5, 6.

For further contact: *Edwin Bell* on 267.5988

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY
(34 8018)

*On Getting On And Together And Taking
A On The Road*, director: Allen Harvey
Hobart in late Dec and touring Tas in Jan
THEATRE ROYAL (344244)
A Children's show: *Paddington Bear* To
Dec 26

For further contact: Anne Campbell on
(049) 674470

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDRE THEATRE (50-2626)
After *Through The Looking Glass* by
Mixed Company To Dec 12

Aladdin And His Wonderful Lamp
adapted by Frank Hawes, director,
Marie Camille, music by Robert Gann Jan 5-25

ARENA THEATRE (249667)
School programmes commence in
February

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING
GROUP (347713)

Focus Theatre: *Cape Kelly's Road Show*
with the Ensemble director: Mick
Luthraus, choreographer: Bob
Thornycroft Throughout Dec to Jan
Drunk Is At (the two plays *Repent
Coward* and *Guard Drunk To Justice*) by
Richard Murphy with Margaret
Gannon, Bob Thornycroft and Mark
Minchinton Dec 11-24

ARTS COUNCIL (529-4355)

Touring programme commences in Feb
COMEDY CAFE THEATRE
RESTAURANT (419244)

Downstairs: *True* with Mary Kennedy,
Stephen Blackburn, Geoff Brooks, and
Rod Quinock Dec-Jan, 1981

Upstairs: *Doing His Thing* by Barry
Dickens, starring Barry Dickens Dec-Jan
DRAMA RESOURCE CENTRE
(347244)

To Die Now Or Day by TIE Team Touring
schools and Dec 17 School programmes
commence in Feb

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE

(41 1227)

Wife Not Trying To Be Provocative by

Just The Way We Are by Les Tien Bing
Barker and Ella Green Dec-Jan
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (6633211)
Anna, a musical based on the life story of
Eva Peron, director, Harold Prince,
choreographer, Larry Fuller composer,
Andrew Lloyd Webber; Lyrics by Tim
Rice musical director: Peter Casey Dec-Jan

LA MAMA THEATRE (343688)
Error in Sample by Daniel Roberts To
Dec 7

LA FORRETT RESTAURANT

(572 1394)

The Walldorfer Polder with Darryl
Timonen and Lenny Barclay Dec-Jan
LAST LAUGH THEATRE
RESTAURANT (419225)

The King Size Whistles Throughout Dec
Mosses's Little House Show director,
Nigel Griffin Jan 13 Upstairs: An
assortment of delicious acts from *The New
Bedroom* to *For Your Ring Barker*
THE MILL THEATRE COMPANY
(222318)

Community Access Workshops, Mill
Night, Run Of the Mill, and Mill Club
MILDMURNE THEATRE COMPANY
(854408)

Athenaeum Theatre: *The New Who Came
To Dinner* by Moss Hart and George S.
Kaufman, director, Simon Chelms,
designer, Anne Fraser To Jan 24

Athenaeum II: *Demolition Job* by Gordon
Graham director: Judah Alexander,
designer: Christopher Smith To Jan 24
Russell Street: *Just One Last Dance* by
Robert Hewitt, director, John Sumner
designer: Tanya McCallin Dec 10-Feb 7
MOUNTBANK (3787364)

Touring secondary schools in the
metropolitan area, throughout Dec
Wangy's Girl director: Alison Richards
OPEN STAGE (3477345)

Ghosts by Ibsen, director, Daryl
Emmott presented by TheatreSpace Dec
10-20

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY

(654488)

Upstairs: *Hesame* by Michel Tremblay,
director, Murray Copland, with Robert
Lynn and Vernon Wells To Dec 20
Downstairs: *Quake Down At The River*

Of The World by David Allen, director,
Murray Copland, with Linda Davies,
Carmie Gannon, Krissy Child and Peter
Parsons To Dec 13

UNIVERSAL WORKSHOP (419411)

Max Gilson in two one-man shows
Swinging In A French Hazard and *Swan* by
Barry Dakin Throughout Dec

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE
COMPANY (3787034)

Gork devised and performed by Linda
Waters Touring different venues Dec and
Jan

School For Children director, David
Swann Dec 5-18

Just A Simple Wake director, Phil

Thomson Opens in Dec
MAJOR AMATEUR COMPANIES
Bain Theatre Group (762 0882)
Clayton Theatre Group (378 1702)
Hendelberg Rep (49 2262)
Mabon Theatre Company (211 0020)
Pumpkin Theatre (424237)
Williamson Little Theatre (328 4287)
1812 Theatre (798 8620)

DANCE

NATIONAL THEATRE (5544022)

Fant by Charles Gounod presented by
the Globe Opera Company Dec 3, 4, 5, 6
Marilyn Byrnes Ballet School Dec 4-10
Archie Wrightby Ballet School Dec 12,
17

The Victorian Ballet School Dec 14-16
New Children's Band Dec 18

PRINCESS THEATRE (6623911)
Performances by named ballet school
throughout Dec

Australian Ballet School presents a
graduation performance Throughout
Dec

For further contact: Cusack, Heather on
2675939

WA

THEATRE

DOLPHIN THEATRE (325 1990)

University Dramatic Society: *Confessions*
programme From Jan 9

HAYMAN THEATRE (3587034)

WA Theatre Company and Theatrepo-
rse presents *Mr Egg And The Boney
Boys* writer and director: Tony Nicholls,
with Barrie Barika and a seven fast track
budget

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (3216288)
The Devil Down Stage Dec 9-13

Charles about by Brandon Thomas,
director, Raymond Gosses, with Glen
Hitchcock, Rosemary Bam, Ivan King,
Yock Hawkins Jan 6-24

THE HOLE IN THE WALL (3812407)
Families by Jack Heinert, director, Peter
Morrin, with Leith Taylor, Alisa Piper,
Jenny Davis From Nov 19

THE MAGIC MIRROR THEATRE
COMPANY

Margaret River Show Band by John
Asker, director, Mike Morris From Dec
1

THE NATIONAL THEATRE (3251500)
Oliver director, Stephen Barry, with
Margaret Ford and Edgar Micallef Nov
20-Dec 20

For further contact: Joan Ambrose on
2666629

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THE SPIN'S PRIZE (CROSSWORD No. 22)

Name _____

Address _____

P code _____

1. Erased on Southern Cross (2)
2. Coward's just desert (1)
3. Nicely chosen of play (2,3,9)
4. This always gives the first woman the right to another helping (8)
5. Poem during the last in a Shakespeare play (9)
6. Similar to a strange scene logo
7. "There was it at that dawn to be" (Wordworth) (3)
8. Spoon with the bay (the French said) (3)
9. A scene following the rodent in the plain how bravely! (9)
10. Red Unga put in a story for the post (6)

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21. Duck a plane (model) one for the bear (8)
24. The understanding shows our today's man (10) (14)
25. He protects the horned beauty's wand using around a swamp of moss (20)
26. Five hundred beers consumed in the valleys (3)

Down

1. Making one come up against an observation (12)
2. A number pronounced above the hour (3)
3. Play a tune in time with drums, maracas and horns (3)
4. Remains the dishes and departs (6, 9)
5. There are three points about the cloud of pride that are self-making
6. You don't lose it's said having become then (9)
7. Railway (5)
8. Niblock might have been (8 with them) (5, 7)
11. Gave for approaching the house (9)
14. Timor was to share gold
16. Pub's based in flop up North (5)
20. Parly howaching since (5)
22. bound attempt to publish the union (5)
23. Southern smoother with a wad of notes (8)

The winner of last month's crossword was Mr. Scott Davies of The Spa, Sydney, N.S.W. The first correct entry drawn on Dec. 27 will receive one year's free subscription to Theatre Australia.

